

АВТОР
БЕСТСЕЛЛЕРОВ
«ЛЕДОКОЛ» И
«АКВАРИУМ»

ВИКТОР СУВОРОВ ЗМЕЕЕЕД

1936 ГОД. НАЧАЛО «БОЛЬШОЙ ЧИСТКИ».
ОН ДЕЛАЕТ КАРЬЕРУ В ОРГАНАХ.
КАКУЮ ЦЕНУ ОН ГОТОВ ЗАПЛАТИТЬ
ЗА НЕОГРАНИЧЕННУЮ ВЛАСТЬ
И ВОЗМОЖНОСТЬ РАСПОРЯЖАТЬСЯ
СУДЬБАМИ ДРУГИХ ЛЮДЕЙ?

Приквел остро-
сюжетных романов
«Контроль» и «Выбор»

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Новая повесть от автора
супербестселлеров
«Аквариум» и
«Ледокол»

Abstract

The action of Viktor Suvorov's new action-packed historical story *The Serpent Eater*, a prequel to the best-selling novels *Control* and *Choice*, takes place in 1936 in an atmosphere of ongoing struggle for power, intrigues and conspiracies within the leadership of the USSR. The story tells about the very beginning of the process of taming the punitive machine of the Soviet Union by Stalin; the reader will learn about the circumstances under which fate brought together the main characters of the novels "Control" and "Choice" and what price each of them had to pay for unlimited power and the ability to control the fate of other people. The story "Snake Eater" is a unique historical reconstruction of the events

of 1936, including little-known events, and the prototypes of its main characters - Alexander Kholovanov, Shirmanov, Sey Seich and others - were real historical figures who worked hand in hand with Stalin and helped him climb pinnacle of power. In the center of the story is the career of the protagonist, nicknamed the Snake Eater, in the NKVD, from a simple observer, an outdoor surveillance agent and an executioner, an executioner working with especially important "clients", to a commissioner for especially important cases, deputy of one of Stalin's close associates and head of a special strike group conducting covert operations throughout Europe. A special appendix contains more than 50 photographs of the 1930s, including unique archival photographs published for the first time, telling about the

characters in the story and the prototypes of its heroes.

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Viktor Suvorov

ZMEEED

Before the start of the Great Purge, there were 41 State Security Commissars in the top leadership of the NKVD.

The title of General Commissar of the State Security was equal to the title of Marshal of the Soviet Union. This title was then worn by only one person. He was arrested and shot. Of the

seven commissioners of the State Security Service of the 1st rank, they were arrested and seven.

Of the 13 commissars of the State Security Service of the 2nd rank, 11 were arrested and shot, one was poisoned in the office of the new deputy head of the NKVD, who, in turn, was arrested and shot a year later in the second wave of purges. Of the

20 commissioners of the 3rd rank GB, three committed suicide. 15 were arrested and

shot, one fled to Manchuria, where he was later killed by the Japanese. Of the 41 State Security

Commissars who, on the eve of the Great Purge, led the secret police of the Soviet Union, two survived 1937 and 1938. After Stalin's death, one of them was arrested and shot, the second was arrested, during the investigation he went crazy and died in a psychiatric clinic of a prison

type.

Prologue

"So you haven't killed a single person in your entire life?" And so it goes: not one. — None at all?

- Yes, everything somehow did not fall out.

- Never ever? The guy was

completely embarrassed: - Never ... -

Well, you give! You will

soon be twenty-one, and you ...

- So life evolved

that ... - And you remember. Maybe in his youth ... Well, at least

one ... or, perhaps, in childhood? - Didn't kill.

Why were you sent to us? - Don't know. An order has been signed to come to you, and here it is. The

authorities know

better. — Who were you before? - Scout-

observer on the eighth platform of the North Station.[1] The performers looked at each other, whistled: what a

career! - You, the boy, apparently,

are friends with the authorities: from an observer scout and right into an assistant performer in-

Lefortovo! No one has done such a takeoff before you. Such an order could only be signed by the People's Commissar Comrade Yagoda himself. That's what he signed. - Who is pulling you up the career ladder with such speed? "I don't know who pulls. Honestly Komsomol, I don't know. I don't have a blat. Rootless me. From the homeless. Do you know the NKVD colony for tramps in

Bolshevo? Named after Comrade

Dzerzhinsky. So I'm from there. Reforged, reeducated, and into intelligence. For two years he worked as an observer on the tenth platform, then he was promoted, and transferred to the eighth. I spent a year there, they promised to transfer me to the seventh platform for shock work, and then suddenly - bam: the order - to the henchmen

performer...

"Something is wrong here. That doesn't happen. To reach such heights, people blow their trumpets all their lives. And the queue to our group is longer than the White Sea-Baltic Canal. Honored people ask us - we don't take ... Performers from the republican people's commissariats are eager to come to us, masters with many years of experience...

- And I'll come to you right away ... - Yes, maybe we won't take you into our team, you illiterate! What are you to us?

- So you will order and report to Comrade Yagoda's secretariat? The order was personally signed by them.

"Order is a serious matter. Yes, we have a tight-knit team. If you don't fit in, we'll survive. And Comrade Yagoda will not help. You will ask us. We have a serious job. We put the last point in every case. Here you have to think. Let's test your intelligence. Ready? - Ready. "Look, before performing, you must absolutely make sure that this is exactly the one you need.

For this

client, they bring us here. Right here in this office. The client does not know that his right now is that. Our decor, as you can see, is inviting, even a curtain on the window. **I am** sitting at the table. The case is before me. I turn pages. We're being polite here. I suggest that he sit down. And questions - about the name and patronymic and year of birth ... And on the table on my right hand - a pack of "Kazbek" and matches. What would you put on your left hand? The boy glanced up at the ceiling. But there was no answer on the ceiling. Looked out the window. But I didn't find anything interesting there either. I had to think for myself. And he realized:

- A bag of mint gingerbread.

The performers exchanged glances. Silently agreed: right boy thinks.

Chapter 1

1

My name is Iolanta. "Me..."

He thought for a moment. - And me - Ivan Ivanovich.

"That's how we met, Ivan Ivanovich. —

How old are you, Iolanta? "Eighteen already,"

Iolanta lied habitually, without batting an

eyelid. - And how much does it cost? - Three rubles. - Are you crazy? - Find cheaper. -

Let's go for two. Iolanta

measured the

depth of the

bottomless sky with her

squinting eyes and

agreed: "Let there be two, only money in advance." She agreed so quickly that he even regretted it: he

could have offered a ruble, or even fifty dollars. But it

has already been proposed and already accepted. - OK. And where? - I have a place. - What place? - Through the station square, through the tram lines, around the corner,

there, in the alley, -

a tavern, behind the tavern

- a stable, in the

attic - a hayloft. There is no one there, in the hayloft.

- Fine. Only I will pay when we arrive. So as not to run away money.

"Ah, we are so distrustful... Follow me, only on the other side of the street. And don't look at me all the time. It's like you're walking. Like you don't know me and don't notice me.

2

So, everything from the very beginning. — Comrade General Commissar of State Security, everything was as usual. But this time the wheel burst ... - It was necessary to change. —

Spare turned out to be a puncture. - I should have called. - I

called, no one answered, again ... - In short, how late were you? "Two hours nine minutes. - Further. -

Arrived at

the North Station late. Searched everything. He was absent. - Have you

contacted the police? - Of course

not. - Right. So

where is he? — I don't know

how through the ground. -

"Vladivostok - Moscow" arrived on the first platform? - As always, first. Did you find out who

worked on the first one? - Should was

Zvonarev, undercover pseudonym - Bryl. But he

in retraining. Instead, the Serpent Eater worked from the eighth platform.

3

- Hello, Snake. — I wish

you good health, Comrade Narodny Ko... — At

home, I'm just Genrikh Grigorievich. —

Hello, comrade Genrikh Grigorievich. Genrikh

Grigoryevich offered his hand. The Serpent Eater shook the tender white hand of the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs.

- Sit down.

The snake-eater sits down, and he himself notices: the people's commissar, under the table, imperceptibly wiped his hand with a handkerchief, and the batiste handkerchief with embroidered letters went into the wastebasket. Again, it's impercept

But it was not in vain that the Snake-Eater spent three years as a scout-observer at the North Station. The serpent sees everything. It just doesn't show. So accustomed. Big bosses, a well-known case, have respect for their hands. Comrade Yagoda's predecessor, Comrade Menzhinsky, had the same manner - he came to Bolshevo, to a homeless colony, shook the hands of all the punks. And then, it happened, he would go around the corner, so that unnoticed, and there, from a special canister, alcohol was poured into his hands. The homeless once told him that it would be better if he didn't shake hands with them and didn't wash his palms with alcohol, but would immediately give them

a canister, so they would love him more for that ... -

So, dear Snake-Eater, you now have a new job. Snake-Eater thought what to answer, but did not come up with

anything
smart.

Instead of answering, he shook his
head. - Like? - Still would! - I raised

you to such a height. Thank you, Heinrich Grigoryevich. - The order is still preliminary. I will sign the order. - Will try. -

Now - to

business. First of all, sign this paper here. This is a non-disclosure agreement. You, Snake-Eater, have never been to my dacha, you have never met me, you have never spoken to me.

- Understood.

- If you understand, sign it. And let's go out into the garden. It's stuffy in here.

4

— Luska! -

Yes. -

Lyuska, who did you bring, bitch? —

Beaver.

So he's a Chekist. -

And how should I know?

5

- Here, Comrade Snake-eater, ten photographs. Are you anyone from these people were seen yesterday on the first platform of the North Station?

- I saw this one. Courier "Vladivostok - Moscow", arrived at fifteen o'clock ten minutes. He got out of the sixth car.

— Wait... There are twelve carriages in the train. All passengers get off in Moscow. And meeting - the crowd. Your shift is eight hours. How many trains come and go per shift. And did you see one? Do you remember one? Did he get any attention? No, this one was inconspicuous. But I look

at everyone. Job
such.

- Continue. - This
one was in a gray suit, hat, with a briefcase. Think,
Chekist. Middle boss. - No no. He is
not a Chekist. Why do you think so? "Just saw them for a
lifetime. Guessed... You're wrong. "About fifteen
minutes later, when

the crowd subsided, he reappeared on the platform. Apparently he was
looking for someone. - And then? - Then he
left. This man

has disappeared.
Where do you think he might have gone? - The most correct option:
the Zhigants put up a shendra walking
and took the beaver to the

tack. The people's commissar
grimaced: "Can you speak
Russian?" — Excuse me, Genrikh Grigoryevich. A man rode for almost two
weeks on a train, and before that, maybe he went by steamboat to the mainland
for four, or even five days, he got tired, and then - Moscow, went out to the
platform, no one met him, walked around, waited, still walked, and on the square
of three stations, lucky girls hunt ... - And then
what? - Then he

will lead such a larva to a secluded corner, offer a drink for a start. She
herself, shameful lakhudra, of course, drinks first, then pours him. At this point,
sleight of hand is everything. He swallows - and from the hooves. Here the
partners show up, swindle the lift, the shoveler, the bracelets...

- And what about him?

- And they will throw him under the bridge or in the bushes in the cemetery. He will depart, naked, in a day - there is noise in his head, he does not remember anything. But if he is a Chekist, then it will

be worse for him. -

Why worse? "Because the Zhigans will climb into the shoveler, figure out who they ran into. The Chekist will not leave things like that, he will look for them all his life later. So don't look for...

- That's what, Snake, this man must be found. Maybe he's still alive. It is very important. / provided you with an unprecedented increase, I will also give you an apartment, I will arrange the future, at your new job - the highest salary and a lot of free time. All free time is spent searching. Report only to me. How do you think to search?

"Here, Comrade General Commissar of State Security, it's not for me to tell you: you need to notify the regional departments of the NKVD of Moscow and the Moscow Region, search all attics and basements, all wastelands, ruins, gardens, parks, send out a photograph: disappeared

Human...

- No, no, only not this ... - Then

there is only one way: to look for a lure. I know all the shmar who regularly work at three stations. The native larva will not do this. Yes, they won't put it on. Only a stray one is suitable for such a thing. - And you yesterday at the station ... noticed

a new, stray? - Noted. What do you need to search? - Give me a file cabinet for all

the juvenile marukhs and thieves

of the Union. Preferably by districts - from Moscow to the outskirts. In addition, in every Moscow school, in every class, at the end of the school year, group photographs are taken ... We need to collect all the photos from all schools, orphanages, juvenile colonies over the past two or three years ... Painfully immature flashed past. - There is no need to take photographs. In our NKVD they are all collected.

I will give you a room. But if... If she is... not from Moscow? - Then I will look for Yaroslavl, Tula, Tver ... - Do you have a lot of work to do in Lefortovo tomorrow?

- No, I have two free days, and then we have a performance only one Zinovievite from the process.

- Let's do this. In the garden behind apple trees and lilacs is a small house. There is nobody there. They will prepare a place for work, a bed, and provide food. Order the chef whatever you want. My secretary Pavel Petrovich will deliver catalogs of juvenile delinquents. Then he will bring photos from all schools in Moscow. Get started right now.

6

The dacha, rather the estate of the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of the USSR, General Commissar of State Security Yagoda Genrikh Grigorievich, is in the village of Kommunarka. There is also a firing range, which in terms of scope of activity is in no way inferior to the ranges in Barysh, Butovo, Strumilino and even in Kurapaty.

The good thing is that it is very close from Moscow. The enemies of the centers are being shot at in Moscow prisons. But this is, so to speak, piece production. On rare nights - several dozen. And if there are three four hundred at once, then it is here, behind those blind gates.

It's also good that you don't have to spend a lot of effort on protecting many objects. In Kommunarka, everything is in one bouquet - and the summer residences of the leadership, and the rest house of the Chekists, and the training center with a small shooting range, and, of course, a special stage behind a

high gray fence. Indescribable beauty. And silence when there are no executions. But the executions do not particularly upset the silence. Centuries-old pines and green Christmas trees reliably jam the shooting.

The People's Commissar's garden is huge: apple trees, cherries, gooseberries, red and black currants, blackberries. And further into the depths - a sea of lilacs and bird cherry. And there, in the thicket, is a log house. Pavel Petrovich Bulanov, secretary of the People's Commissar, filled this house with photographs. Comrade Bulanov's rank is Senior Major of State Security. In his buttonholes he has two rhombuses, like an army commander. The bourgeoisie would call him a lieutenant general. But in a workers' and peasants' state there are no generals, and there cannot be. The general is a relic of a cursed past.

Friendly Pavel Petrovich. Everyone is asking if they can help. How can you help the Serpent? He alone noticed a pretty face in the crowd and then realized that the girl was not one of those who arrived and not one of those leaving, not one of those meeting and not seeing off. Who else is at the stations and spinning around? Only the one who works here. And the one who does something.

Everyone who works

at the Northern Station is known by the Snake-Eater. She is not one of those. Hence...

7

The entire floor is filled with folders of photographs. All tables and shelves. Works Snake. Only sometimes the cook distracts him from work. The personal cook of the people's commissar has been ordered to enter this house. Only Comrade Yagoda and Comrade Bulanov know about the work of the Serpent Eater. The cook is supposed to gently knock on the door three times a day: what do you want?

The snake-eater deigned cranberry vodka and dumplings with cherries and sour cream. Vodka - just a little bit. For appetite. And dumplings - to satiety. Well, what's for breakfast? And dumplings for breakfast. And for lunch. Keep it up. The cook in the garden

under the trees lays a table with a blue tablecloth. In the shadow. It would be a good time to drink your fill and fall under the cherries. But there is no time for that. Night, day and more night and day. Three hours of sleep, then two more, and three more. -

This one. -

Sure? - Very similar.

8

On Krasnaya Presnya, right next to the prison, there are tall fences. There is also barbed wire above the fences. Entrance - through steel gates with red stars, entrance - through the checkpoint with stern armed guards. This is the Military Transit Point, WFP.

Behind the fences are buildings like barracks. Only those barracks are made of brick, firmly built by Sovereign Nikolai Alexandrovich. The windows are almost under the ceilings. One meter high, two and a half wide. Something similar to gun embrasures. You enter - a hall with a tiled floor. At the entrance - orderly. No one will be allowed in here. To the right and left of the main hall are the bedrooms. Beds - soldier's, iron. In two tiers. 160 beds in the right bedroom. 160 on the left. This is a hostel for bachelors of the First Combat Group of the Fifth Department of the Main Directorate of State Security (GUGB) of the NKVD of the USSR. The snake-eater lives here. He has a free exit out of the gate: he wanted - he left, he wanted - he entered. Even at midnight, even at dawn. The Snake Eater has its own bed and bedside table, and the iron closet has its own section with a padlock. In the closet is an overcoat with ripped buttonholes, a pair of cowhide boots, rubber boots, low shoes from the Skorokhod factory, a canvas raincoat, a sheepskin coat, a Kubanka hat, felt boots with rubber galoshes, three shirts, spare pants, a revolver with cartridges and brass knuckles.

Brass knuckles lead Snake-Eater made himself. He collected bullets in a shooting gallery, smelted lead, molded and cast a mold. Brass knuckles in a pocket are inconvenient to carry - it delays. Therefore, the Snake-Eater ordered a leather bag for a belt from a shoemaker. He goes on duty with a revolver, and brass knuckles - with him, just in case. Fedya Sverchok, who knows everything, explained to Zmееed a long time ago that brass knuckles is a French word, **casser** is "to break", **tête** is "head". **Casse-tête** is a puzzle. But the Russians interpreted the term overseas too straightforwardly. Snake-

eater sits on the bed, on a blue cloth blanket with black stripes, thinks. Everything seems to be fine. And something is not good. The new work of an assistant performer is interesting, exciting, honorable, and monetary. On the days of execution, a hundred-gram dose is provided, but they give as much as you want, without looking at the norms. And they feed them with buckwheat porridge with butter, with meatballs. Is it bad? But for some reason, Zmееed does not like the story of the missing passenger at the North

Station. In the far corner, Fedya Sverchok is reading a book. Fedya always reads. Without breaking away. Snake-

Eater sat down next to him: "Listen, bespectacled, how was the investigation carried out under Tsar

Ivan? — Two options: with traces and without. - And how - with traces?

- The easiest way - they rubbed their arms, legs with ropes, belly or some other tender place. -

And no traces? -

Lots of ways. They put it on the back, arms and legs are stretched and knitted, on the belly and on the chest - an iron dish, on the dish - a good weight, one, another, if not enough - a third ... -

What villainy is the worst? - Of course:

intent on the king. The serf Ivashka will shout "The word and case!" and the carousel spins. What does "word and deed" mean? -

This is the formula. He shouted in the square, shouted in the tavern, and no one dares to touch you after that. On the contrary, everyone should protect you. This cry meant that you knew something about the conspiracy. Everyone was obliged to escort you directly to the king. And whoever goes against you will be burned with fire: why do you stop the path of the truth, why do you

contradict it? - And if I jokingly shouted "word and deed"? If I shouted, but I don't know

a damn thing? "Then they will hang you on a hook in the slaughterhouse in the ribs. Not to joke. Or they will put them in a cauldron of water, make a big fire under the cauldron and boil it. And they won't let you jump. On that hefty men with hammers are attached. They can also hang them by the legs on two ropes, so that the legs are stretched in different directions. And they will cut it in two with a saw along the crotch. Along the

spine to the head. "Understood," said the Snake-Eater, and for some reason he

sighed deeply and lingeringly. He went to his corner, took out a sheet of gray paper, an envelope, an inkwell, and a pen with a steel, scratchy nib. First he wrote on the envelope: "Krasnaya Presnya. WFP. Ask the Serpent Eater.

He was silent for a long time, staring blankly at the blank page. Then he resolutely printed in large letters "Word and Deed."

Chapter 2

1

End of summer. And it smelled like autumn. And back to school soon. In tenth grade. And do not want to. The Moscow girl, the same one that Zmeeed recognized from the photograph, for some reason quarreled with all her friends. And all for nothing. To spite everyone, she took it and waved for a week to her grandfather in Ukraine. in Konotop. Such a small town. Ancient. Grandpa rejoiced. Here, they remembered the old one. And then no one remembers, even the NKVD. The girl sat all

morning in her grandfather's house. Sat all afternoon. And it's already evening. In the evening, she is unbearable to sit at home. Across the street is a brick wall. Behind the wall is an old park. Dancing in the park. The music there is charming, listen - listen ...

And suddenly a divine melody burst out - "Amur Waves". Surprisingly: we have Amur - a river, great, mighty, ferocious, wayward, treacherous, and for the French, Amur is love. Maybe it's related somehow. After all, love is also a great thing, a powerful, ferocious and insidious thing. Again, a coincidence: they have amorous stories - this is fiction, but such that you can't hold back tears in your eyes. We have "Amur Waves" - such a melody that you have to blink often in order to

tears didn't roll down your cheeks.

In a word, a melody floated over the old park, and the girl could no longer be kept in her grandfather's house. Knit with chains - it will fly away along with chains.

And grandfather and say: nimble, they say, what. We don't have a capital for you. Here we have Konotop. Shpana, that is. And the wings carry the girl to the park. Do not tie her up with persuasion, locks, or bars.

Go far. The entire park is surrounded by a brick wall. The entrance is right on the opposite side. If through a brick wall, it would be nearby. And so around: along the tall wall to the corner, around the corner and again along the wall, and turn again - that's just where the entrance with the lights will open.

It's good that the summer is dry. Because the dust tornado sweeps the street. And if it rains, you can't drive through these streets. Konotop is a place where horses stomp in the mud. Fortunately, there is still a whole month before the impassable season.

Good in the evening. It's light in the evening. And it stung: but to return with lanterns. Where are they, lights? Wow, he's alone on the horizon. Do the Konotop comrades turn it on in the dark, or do they observe the economy mode?

Rounded one corner. Wrapped around another. Came. Above the gate there are letters in human height: "Life has become better. Life has become more fun. I. Stalin. Bought a ticket. She passed the gate and cursed herself: the park is wild, like a tropical forest. The alley runs into the dance floor. Lanterns along the alley. And there are lights on the site. But the whole park is in darkness. And muzzles. Do you know what muzzles are in the

Konotop park? No, you don't know what muzzles are in the Konotop park. If modern directors had hit that time and in that park, and would have made a film about thieves and thieves, then at the moment they would have earned an Oscar for surrealism.

And the girls in the Konotop park are also surreal. Vulgarly smeared. Girls of the same stripes: thieves and bribed ones. Painted girls. In tattoos. A policeman in the Konotop park was put up for order:

his eyes were cloudy, a cigarette stuck to his lower lip, a gray anchor was on his right hand, and "VASYA" was written in crooked letters on his left. They turned their attention to the girl. From under the caps, put

on the eyes, - the views of the rapist. And she didn't like the look at all. That look not only raped her, but also killed her. - Aspid, look what a babe! "No, Lizard, not my type. Mala. Two years later. - You're stuck, Aspid. You don't honor an oxtail for meat. And I will. This is just right for me. And to my guys. Yes, and the police are not a sin to use. She won't live two years. Let's use it and notice.

- All sorts of people walk around here, and then we will have one hundred and fifty-third article sew.

"And a hundred and thirty-six."

How can a girl know the content of the articles of Criminal Code-26? But I realized: youth has departed. Rolled back. Cut off. As soon as I entered the park, my youth is over. On the other side of the park gates - life in dreams

pink. This is adult life. Without hopes and illusions. And the last hours of that life are measured out. OK. As long as the deeds qualified by the aforementioned articles are not committed, she will dance.

And it should be noted especially: she was a great hunter and master of dancing. Born to dance, built to dance. And nothing but dancing in her head for a long time did not last. It happened to her at closed screenings for privileged children foreign films, not recommended for the proletariat, to look at. And as soon as he sees some kind of dance-foreign trick in the film, he does not sleep all night, he trains. She knew dance tricks no less than the great Capablanca knew chess tricks. Each time she went out onto the dance floor as if to her last and decisive battle: either she would dance all her rivals at once, or right there and die the inspired death of that hero who gave all his strength to the last to the great cause of the liberation of the working class. Life is given to a person only once, and it must be lived in such a way that it is not excruciatingly painful for the aimlessly lived years. So she is not painful, she is not in pain, and her years are not aimless. She has a great purpose in life. Great and

simple, and dazzling in its simplicity: to learn how to dance in such a way that you can make a smooth three-turn jump on the parquet floor! Isn't it a dream! So she lived, and so far she has never died. Why die if she danced all her rivals at the dance. A jump in three turns - it will come. Will definitely come!

She lived well in the rhythm of the waltz, in the trembling of the overseas dance. But dancing ruined her. I danced. What to do in such a situation? There was nothing left but to dance. It is rightly said: to die, so with music.

Music in the Konotop park is like everywhere else: Utyosov and Shulzhenko. And also old waltzes: the waves of the Amur, the Danube, or the Manchurian hills.

Snapped up girl. Nobody refuses. Dancing like a clockwork devil. If the music did not stop, then it would continue, and sometimes you have to interrupt it. Eh, if she were a pop star, she would sing along to great singers, dancing. So it would have been if she hadn't hit the Konotop site that evening. Since that evening, her life danced in a different direction.

Past the stages.

2

Thundering orchestra. She's good at music. I forgot all my fears. She shook a dozen gentlemen to shortness of breath, to green devils in their eyes. No one else invites her. Well, she can do it herself. One. To everyone's surprise. And believe the word, her dances are worthy of amazement. Somewhere nearby, in the black bushes, someone is being beaten in the face. They hit for a long time. Tiring. And a groan from there, and plaintive sobs. And someone yells in a terrible voice, and a valiant whistle from the darkness announces a new scuffle. And debris flutter over the park like petrels. Garbage is an old term. Pre-revolutionary. The ICC is the Moscow Criminal Investigation. At first, only Moscow detectives were called garbage. Then - and all the rest, not only Moscow. After the revolution, the words "detective", "detective" somehow began to sound indecent. Discordant. Therefore, "detective" was changed to "search". But the garbage remains. Here they are in the Konotop park like noisy crows and flock.

If they appeared, then this is a storm. Storm! The storm is coming soon! And it boomed. A fight broke out, which happens only in our Union, only in dance floors in the central park of a provincial town.

At first, it seemed like a gust of scuffle wind whistled over the crowd, knocked someone down, shrugged it off. And quiet. And then the fight broke out with a hurricane whistle. Knives flashed like a thousand lightning bolts, stakes and shafts shot up over their heads, skulls crunched with coconut nuts, the park rang with broken bottles. A half-liter bottle, unfinished, is good for hitting the head. And it's not a pity that it breaks on someone else's head. Even unfinished - and that is not a pity. That is a pity, of course. But not much. Vodka is almost alcohol. Spilling over a beaten head, over glass, stuck in a skull, vodka sterilizes wounds. Vodka is both an antiseptic and an anesthetic. Folk medicine, so to speak. So, breaking the bottle on the head of your neighbor, remember: there should still be gurgling in the bottle. And hitting a person on the head with an empty bottle is, frankly, barbaric. This is not accepted by our good people.

Breaking an unfinished bottle on someone else's head is good because, breaking, it leaves a piercing tool in the hand of the beater. They can be punched in the face. And they poke. And they cut their faces with razors. And throats. And with bicycle spokes sharpened like swords, they hit in the eyes, and in the stomachs, and in the asses, and where they should not. The pointed spoke of a bicycle wheel - popularly known as a "peak" - seems to outsiders to be a terrible weapon. But this very peak testifies in favor of my great people. In favor of his noble inclinations. Doesn't it remind of the chivalrous traditions of the Musketeers? One girl remained on the dance floor. Know yourself dancing. Nobody around. And she doesn't care. The fight
 roars like a hurricane. And a waltz over the park: "Beauty-and-willow Amu-
ura wave ..."

3

Suddenly she stopped. I came to my senses. She stopped, because the roar of the fight drowned out the roar of music, and without music, dancing is kind of like ... You understand.

She glanced at the big clock on the tower, was stunned: it was almost midnight. It's time to go home. She escaped from the site, and there was only one way for her: along the alley to the exit. And there is the very center of the massacre. You won't break through. And if you make your way through, there is a joint at the gates of rubbish petrels, they drive humility into the people with rubber sticks. So our girl would have rushed to the gates, but the petrels are painfully diligent, waving oaks, like the Kremlin carpets before the historical congress of their na
beat out.

No, the way is booked there. Therefore - into the bushes, into the impenetrable darkness. After the spotlights, there are circles in the eyes - nothing can be seen. But she, like a winged mouse in the dark, rustles her skirt, without running into obstacles. One of her very old predecessors, in exactly the same situation, running away at midnight, lost her crystal slipper. The story about the slipper, no matter how fabulous it may seem, is pure truth. The ancient tradition has been fully confirmed by modern experience. Our girl, running away, immediately lost her left shoe, and on

broke off the right heel. It's for the best: no heels speed
higher.

We must pay tribute to the dance skills. In our country, modern dances have been condemned for decades: they say, a waste of youth energy. Like, there would be no way for them, dancers, to consume that energy in business. To turn, for example, the northern rivers to the southern shores, forcing them to flow back. An no. They mate and ride mares. There is merit in such a judgment. But we must also intercede for dancing. Ridge wobbling, swaying backwards and kicking out with legs also have a positive effect on a young growing body: the muscles of the legs and back, shoulder and hip girdle are strengthened, blood circulation, heart and lung function are improved. So, if you sparkle with your heels in an impassable park at night, bypassing the fighters with sharp turns, it is better to sparkle with trained heels. Here is the brick wall. And there are plenty of trees along the wall. Like an Amur squirrel, a tree monkey, she flew up the trunk to the crest of the wall. In the end, she moved the shoe, broken off, but still

pointed, to someone who was trying to grab it. Moved to where the legs meet. Got it. I say for sure that I hit, because the screech in response to this is evidence. And again I'll say a good word to dancing: regular training in a dance circle or in a choreographic studio increases the accuracy of movements. Now, if she hadn't trained, hadn't danced every day until
she

dropped, then, you see, she wouldn't have hit. And so, whip - and in the bull's-eye. Jumped over the fence. From a height from the very - bubukh on the road, but in the house to yourself! And grandfather Makar hears the noise of the battle and his imagination draws terrible horrors. Grandfather guards with a gun, and the dog is unleashed. But the old man knows that he will never see his granddaughter. Didn't save, didn't see. To fall into the clutches of the

Konotop punks is the same as to fall into the clean, warm, kind hands of the native Soviet government.

It was then that she jumped from the fence almost nearby, but like a mouse in a hole - yurk. And behind the brick wall - a cry. It seems that someone in the most tender places was bitten with something sharp. -

Grandfather, do you have a revolver? - the face of happiness itself
glows.

- We don't keep things like
that. - You're lying, grandfather! Do you hope to live until the moment when this
power will be cut. Well, you don't even have a revolver just in case? - I'll get by with
a gun. - You're lying,
grandfather! - The
revolver is a prank. If the gun is not enough, then I
machine gun.

- Well, he spoke. Machine gun. With a machine gun I have to dance tomorrow
inconvenient. But give me a machine gun, I somehow with a machine gun.

- No, girl, tomorrow they will tie you up with a machine gun, they will take away the machine gun,
and what will be left for me? I've been waiting all my life ... How can I then without a machine gun? Go
sleep.

She climbed into the attic, spread a blanket on the fragrant hay, covered herself
with another, lies, stares into the darkness. She is going to the dance tomorrow. It's
decided. How nice to dance under the "Amur Waves". How charming it is to be the
center of attention in this pleasant province, where manners are so primitively simple
and not distorted by pretense. And the machine gun would be hidden in the bushes in
advance. A little bit - zipper them all from a machine gun, and then dance. Damn
grandfather, where is he hiding the machine gun? Search the whole garden - you will
not find it. He hid it so that the Chekists would not find it. It is clear that she has nothing
to try to look for that machine gun. Hrych is old, he doesn't dance at dances and doesn't
give people machine guns. Twisted-twisted - can not sleep. I

got up and the light came on. Good in the attic. Too bad there's no moon in the
window. The nights are almost September. The sky vyzvezdil, and on the bottoms of
darkness. What book to read. Grandfather's attic is littered with all sorts of good things.
There are also books here. True, they are of little interest: some Guderian, "Attention,
tanks!", Again Guderian, "Tanks - forward!", Moscow, Military Publishing, 1935. Or here
is a completely new "Field Charter of the Red Army of 1936". PU-36. And to hell with
the Konotop grandfather Guderian? And what can he subtract in PU-36?

On the other hand, why not read? Here will be envy
rivals, when in a close circle of friends the PU-36 will retell!

Night to dawn, and she rustles the pages. Entertaining booklet. Already in the morning, grandfather rumbled with pieces of iron in the yard, exchanged a joke with the driver who drove up, and carried away grandfather on his affairs, which are not at all interesting to us. Then she decided a machine gun search.

Searched - did not find. It's a pity. And the question on the agenda: what to do? Oh how I want to dance in the evening. At least three hours, no more. Well, at least for a while! Though there is only one dance, the most decent one. Well, at least with one eye to look at the dances. How about returning? Without a machine gun? Well, yesterday the fight came to the rescue. We can hope for a fight today. But if not, then how? After all, there are exceptional days when there is no fight in the Konotop park. What if such a day does happen?

She looked all over the attic in search of something that could serve as a replacement for a machine gun. Good, I repeat, there is plenty in the attic. Here, for example, is an old time clock. Why not a weapon! The clock lies in the dust, the cuckoo has long rusted, and a bloodsucker spider has settled in its house. The cuckoo no longer crows: to know that the villainous spider has drunk all her blood. A familiar tactic - many do this: wrote a denunciation of a neighbor and sent him where he should. Comrades will knock at night, the neighbor's neck will be twisted, and the house is free, climb in there like a fly-eating spider. However, the cuckoo's nest was

of little interest to our girl. A weight on a chain - that's what's interesting. I riveted the chain with tweezers. She weighed the weight in her hand - cast lead. Grams for four hundred pulls. I figured out how the weight on the chain looks. Looks good. But if not a chain, but that rawhide leather strap through the eyelet? She crumpled the strap, soaked it in sunflower oil, kneaded it again, dried it, threaded it into the eye of a lead weight, grabbed it with two bundles. She twisted the weight on the strap, remembered the famous gymnasts who dance with jump ropes and other things on the carpet to thunderous applause. And then I remembered that I hadn't slept all night. I would be glad not to sleep, but by the evening she needs to be fresh. And so she stretched out on the fragrant hay, smiled to herself, and fell asleep with a smile. And the sun had already risen and the roof was hot, the heat was in the attic, and in the heat the most sleepless sleep. Scattered, scattered girl in charming nakedness. Now, if at that moment in that attic there would have been some famous Goya with brushes and with

paints, would immortalize. But at that moment there was neither canvas, nor brushes, nor paints, nor Goya himself in the attic, and therefore it fell to me to describe the picture instead. But it is said: it is better to see once than to hear a hundred times. How can you describe in words what you need to look at? I don't describe. Trust me, it was something to see.

5

She slept deeply and peacefully. She dreamed of a good old British light machine gun. "Lewis". 1914. 47 rounds in the disk ... In the Civil War, how many of them were brought in. Not everyone died. Not all are confiscated. Our people are caring. Do not waste the good ... Someone is hiding somewhere ... but how to find it?

She also dreamed about the Konotop park. And dancing. And heard the music in a dream. Waltz. Danube waves.

Happy is he who hears music in his sleep. I

was frightened: did you overslept the dance? She shook herself, shook herself, broke out of the sticky, never-waking darkness into the reality of the attic. Sees: the sun is setting. He hears: behind the wall of brick tango, like a factory trumpet roars, it seems that the proletarians are summoning to righteous deeds. She grabbed it and let's wash and comb her hair. The hour has just passed. Well, if not an hour, then an hour and a half at the most, and she is already ready. At its best: black stockings, black skirt, light, black sweater, Asian silk scarf around the neck. It wasn't black, so it's blue. Dark blue. Today I decided without heels. The style is different today.

The grandfather was surprised: you, girl, are in black. Isn't it for a funeral? Funny grandpa. And she really dressed up for death in black: if you have to pay for an evening of dancing with your life, she will pay. Life without dancing is still not life. Who needs such a life? She kissed her grandfather on the prickly bristles three times, the black bag on her shoulder. And she went.

6

The park thunders with the gramophone revolution. And muzzles along the alleys. And garbage Vaska with a cigarette. Maybe since yesterday that same cigarette had stuck on my lip. And you won't understand: the thieves have turned into garbage, or the garbage is slurping under the thieves. She walks in the park and is not afraid yet. The faces are all familiar. She did not try to remember those faces and nicknames. But before that, the people are picturesque: I would

like to forget the mug of an animal and her nickname, but you will never forget. Here is Asp. Here is the Lizard. Here are the small punks with a husk around: Minka Gondon, Cormorant Solovyevich, Zhmot Tugosesy and such a snotty white-eyed spine named Tropical Shit. Yesterday she grabbed all of them with one glance, in memory of her each one separately, like a small insect in the collection, she brought them in, first pricked on a pin. She didn't try, but she

remembers everyone and smiles at everyone: hello, Aspid! Lizard - fiery! The Lizard looked badly,

did not answer the greetings. Spaniards bared their teeth. Well, okay. She dances for her pleasure. An hour, and another, and a third. I missed it only when, well after midnight, the farewell waltz was announced. And again, the "Amur Waves" rocked the park. They beat people in the park here and there, but there is no big fight. This is where she got scared for the first time. It's so scary that I don't want to dance the final waltz. She went out into the alley and, alone, went home. Passed the illuminated gate, plunged into darkness. Far, far away, a flashlight flickers. The dog howls. Night - gouge out your eyes. The cool of autumn breathed. Little by little, my eyes got used to the darkness. Nobody behind. And they seem to be going. Added a step. Hears: they also a

Looking back is not good in such a situation. Doesn't look back. He just hears: there are five or six of them. I would like to jerk the firebird into the skies. In terrible dreams, she always did this: just some danger - r-r-once on her wings, and flew away. But she is not in a dream. And there are no wings. And he commands his naughty fastidious feet not to rush so fast. He understands: it's like running from dogs, you run - and they run. Only faster. Passed the first turn, and to the second for all eternity

you will not make it. The brick wall along the wide street rises to the very horizon invisibly. On the other side of the street

the fences are two heights, and the houses behind the fences are dark, dead, the dogs behind those fences clang with their teeth.

She goes and goes. Those behind came to life - jokes, chuckles, otherwise they howl with a terrible voice, and they laugh like hyenas in Africa. She doesn't know how to get to the next corner. He walks and walks, but he does not move towards. Finally, a corner appeared in the

darkness, and those behind seemed to have lagged behind. So she wants to rush around the corner of this coveted one, she really wants to. And the moment is most appropriate: they fell behind. And suddenly she realized that she was in a trap. Around the corner, they are waiting for her. That's why the back ones fell behind, so that she jerked around the corner, so that, therefore, those who were around the corner would fall into the paws of the most. And she already knows in advance who is around the corner. The lizard is who. The unblinking snakes gave him such a nickname behind his eyes. And thieves trash Vaska with him. And they fell behind behind - this is Aspid with court punks. They are driving her

into a trap. Not sitting. Squeezed her head with an iron hoop. She would have a machine gun. "Lewis". It's a pity, he weighs 17 kilograms with an equipped magazine. You can't hide it under the floor. The revolver would be the most seedy ... But he is not there either.

Then she obeyed no reason. Then she acted like a clockwork soldier: an iron spring, and a wooden head, not thinking. She turned sharply back and went towards those who had fallen behind. No, not out of courage. Because of fear. Go there - at least you know what to expect, but how to turn a brick corner into a terrible unknown?

Five did not understand her maneuver. Stopped and waited for it to come. Came up. - It's a

pity, boys,

that there are five of you, if there were two or three, so I would voluntarily agreed. "Gee," the

boys replied. She understands with

an animal instinct that something else needs to be said, for which they would not pull their paws towards her, but would mumble: "Gee." She told them this, and they answered in unison. And the lead weight from

the watch clock on the rawhide strap is no longer in the purse, but is clamped in the palm of the hand, and the strap is thrown over the wrist with a loop. She spoke, and she unclenched her hand. The weight slipped to the feet, swaying on the strap near the ground, and was not noticed by anyone. Have you decided who will be first? What

are you, Asp?

"Gee," Asp replied. She

rushed to him like a Ussuri tigress. Right shoulder and arm far behind. Falling forward, she slashed like an axe. Her hand nearly slipped out of her shoulder. It whistled over her: either a saber, or a black lightning. It burned Asp on the cheek, on the neck, on the back. Like a Turkish scimitar or a hot steel wire of fire whipped him, a jacket with a shirt was torn open with a razor, and from behind, it seems, someone at the same moment hit a vertebra with ribs with a sledgehammer. It rumbled inside. Aspid screamed, choked: a hot Kamchatka geyser hit in his throat. She pulled that thing towards herself, cutting off Aspid's right ear, and, as it were, moving his whole carcass towards herself. Aspid's legs buckled, he crashed face forward, twisted it, twisted it, waving his legs, trying to bite the road dust with his teeth. She waved her saber, or the devil knows what, but there were no faces in front of her. The

pursuers shied away in different directions, like geese-swans from a fox that jumped, alarming the neighborhood with its wings. Only backs in the dark. Then she chimed in on someone. A crack cracked in that back. And the incomprehensible happened: it hit me on the back, and it reverberated in my legs. Both knees broke at once, and the body crashed into the road without screams and screams, like a locomotive flew off the rails.

She jumped aside, fell on the road, froze. fly out
two around the

corner. - Asp! Asp! Your mother! Where is

she? She pressed herself to the ground. Lies in a deep rut, does not move. She covered her head with a scarf. No wonder she dressed up in all black. With a concept. Go notice. Too bad there are no gloves. Nothing, hide your hands under you ... It's a pity I didn't jump into the bushes. Hidden right on the road. -

Vaska, shine through the

bushes! Vaska the garbage slashed the bushes with a beam, the bear climbed to break branches: but

where is she, her mother! It lies right in the middle of the unpaved road. Got stuck in the dust, squeezed into a rut. Now a flashlight will slash across her face, and she will rise like an Iranian cobra. Here it is necessary to beat to death. Not over the shoulder. And right on the head. Lead weight. On

a rawhide strap. -

Lizard! There is

no one! — Invisible? - Like through the ground.

- Raise the Asp! - Aspid,
what does she do to you?

- Blue-blue, - Asp gurgles in his throat. -

Where are these vile sixes? Run away? Five of us could not cope with one piss? Well, I'll get her tomorrow. I'll take my legs. She lies in the dust, very close

Aspid gurgles in her throat. The second one, whom she had fried, began to move away, groaning, sobbing. Vaska ransacked all the bushes around, swearing. - Vaska, collect sixes! — Let's go,

Lizard, together. She, a witch, will

now jump out of the darkness, jump out, cut her with a saber. "Shlyuzdil, garbage? Has the fraer's soul trembled? -

No, Lizard, I'm so close to you ... The Lizard whistled
with a whistling nightingale, already in his
ears ache.

A whistle echoed from the darkness.

"Come on, childooper!" As soon as you get to your frog, call the red cross, otherwise the Asp may turn black, and the Fleshy One eats the earth. Why did she decorate them so?

Send the Lizard with Vaska-garbage on the way back, out of the darkness a gang gathers around them, growing like a thundercloud. Here the girl would snuggle up to the fences with our shadow, inaudible, and would go home with the bushes. But no. She covered her whole face with a dark kerchief, clamped the weight on the strap in her fist and, like an inaudible ghost, slid behind the Lizard gang.

7

A whole herd of punks gathered. Turned there, here. There is a herd like a horde of Mamaev, destroying everything in its path: it throws benches over fences, crushes cast-iron urns into fragments. In a quiet city, devils are found, and at night the forces of evil reign supreme. One lantern was burning over Konotop - and they put it out, pulling it out of the ground along with a pillar. And the little town is familiar: shut up, closed the windows with shutters, turned off the light, pretends to be dead. No sound, no light. Only the reckless echo groans in the alleys, only the wind howls over the iron roofs, only the chained dogs clang behind

fences that cannot be climbed, only the door in the abandoned house thumps, where yesterday the family was massacred, where there is no one to close the door.

Rushing herd of punks in an inscrutable way. Where will it turn? Left? Right? The funny guys turned to the left. We turned right. The tobacco stall was knocked over, clouds of smoke went over the herd. I met a random passerby, they threw themselves on the fist, they stuffed their faces. Then the whole swarm was brought back to the city park. In the park, everything is as before, only the light has long been cut down both on the central alley and on the dance floor. The horde carried along the dark paths, one way and the other, until everyone was nestled in the playground. They put Vaska the garbage on the stirrup, although there is no one to be afraid of here. From somewhere, an invigorating liquid appeared. The bottles went around. The lizard is holding the council. - So what did she do with Aspid? - Saber! - Come on, bastard, lie! Where did she get the saber from? - No, it's not a saber, it was an

American electric scuffler. I pressed the button
and ... My

brother was in a foreign country, there, he says,
everyone has their own personal scuffle!

"Stop wagging, snotty one. Better tell me who she is, where she comes from. "That, Lizard, I don't know. - I

know. - Speak, Frog. - My
neighbor. I

came to visit my

grandfather Makar. "Well, deer, shall we burn down the house?"

- Come on, Lizard. It is better not to

mess with grandfather Makar. I'll be a bastard, he has a machine gun in the house. He has half of Konotop as friends, and shoots the other half. - So we'll burn him in the house along with his piss. - No, Lizard,

grandfather Makar is not on fire. He will crawl out of the fire like a

snake, find you and pull your legs out. How will he find me? - No problem. Catch any hluzdoper, sweep, that and

shatter to the very core.

"You're talking business, Anteater. We have divorced hluzdopers like rats in the zone. Today this siskuha was threshing Aspid with something and

Meaty, and with them there were three more. They would have to truncate what she was waving, but no, they fled. Let's get them all

here, let's talk. She lies in the grass so close to the Lizard that you can hear him

grinding his teeth. - Well, what are we going to do with the hluzdopers? - Beat the

bottles on their heads! - Let's collect all the park benches, turn them upside down and Let's rock these beauties and throw them on the benches!

"We'll tie them up, put them on the ground, and we'll jump on them from the children's slide until we break the ribs with

our heels!" The accusers also had more radical proposals:

skhlyuzdili - let them keep the answer.

Here it should be noted that in any group there are successful, respected people, and there are people who are not very successful, not very respected. Here are those who are not very good - those are always the most evil, the most zealous guardians of laws and regulations. It's exactly like in the Union of Soviet Writers. There are venerable, talented, respected writers. And there is a writer's punks, riffraff, who are not capable of writing anything but denunciations. So this writer's riffraff is the most cruel, the most bloodthirsty part of the writer's class. Notorious mediocrity are the most zealous fighters for the purity of morals. The Union of Writers of the USSR, as you know, was organized in the manner of a gang, and the same criminal ethics reigned there, therefore the scene in the Konotop park vividly resembled the analysis of personal cases at the plenum of the board of Sovpis. Only organizational conclusions are stricter.

Made a decision. Fulfilled it. We laughed for a long time. Drank what was. Gradually, the herd began to disintegrate. It was decided not to burn Grandfather Makar's house, but to catch a sixteen-year-old ssykukha dancing tomorrow and punish him to the fullest extent of Konotop mores. I broke away from the kodla kodlochka and went with the songs in one direction.

Another kodlochka broke off, went the other way. The horde melts, spreads, disperses. So one completely Lizard remained.

But that's just how it looks to him.

Chapter 3

1

God forbid the pig's horns, but the serf of the nobility. God gave Genrikh Grigoryevich Yagoda both the nobility and the horns. Not in the sense that his wife instructed him to branch. I am not aware of that. Maybe there was something, but they did not report to me. I'm talking about another horn. Furious Heinrich was once a quiet small animal. Like a ferret. In the pharmacy of a distant relative, he stood at the counter, took prescriptions, poured potions into glass jars, glued labels. And he became a multi-ton beast, the skin is impenetrable, like armor on a cruiser, and his weapon is the heavy horn of the NKVD, with which you can smack the belly of anyone you like: even a tailed lion, even a freshwater crocodile. Such an animal stands knee-deep in a swamp, chews African mugs, looks around lazily, squints at the flies, wags its tail, then, as if enraged, it rushed off. Here, beware! Fly out of the way bird! Beast get out of the way! Zashibet!

Genrikh Grigorievich Yagoda - Punishing Sword of the Revolution. Oh, he made a lot of enemies. Millions account. During collectivization alone, twenty million peasants were taken to the taiga and to the bare steppes. So that everyone there in the cold rested! And on May 27 last, 1935, Iron Heinrich signed order of the NKVD No. 00192. The two zeros that begin the number mean that the document is stamped "Top Secret". Documents marked "Secret" have only one zero in front. The order of May 27 required the formation of "troikas" in all districts, regions, and republics. The lowest-level "troika" included the district party secretary, the prosecutor, and the head of the NKVD district department. The same composition is at all other levels of power in the regions and republics, only there the chiefs are of a higher rank.

Our native proletarian courts continue to do their just cause. And besides, in addition to the ships, "troikas" send enemies to the camps. In accordance with order No. 00192, they were granted the right to plant for up to five years. They don't need no trial, no

lawyers, they have no need to call the defendant, ask questions, listen to answers, find out something. Everything became simpler: the three chiefs gathered, drank, ate, signed the list - and the locomotives hum, and the delinquent ones are being transported in veal wagons to the taiga and to the far north. So work hard, dear, at the logging site or at the nickel mines.

Five years, however, is not enough. On the other hand, not everyone is able to delay five years in the gold mines of Dalstroy. Besides, who's stopping you from throwing another five, and then another? For a long

time, Iron Henry at the top punched through the idea of \u200b\u200btriples. He struck, realizing that people from the NKVD would set the tone in all the hundreds and thousands of "troikas" - his people!

So after all, this is just the beginning - to give five years in the camps without trial or investigation, to give without looking at the defendant, without talking to him, to give not personally, not to a person who looks at you, blinking his eyes, but to a soulless list of any size. Then we'll break through ten years, and twenty-five, and the highest measure, too. Heinrich will achieve that any district troika will sign the execution lists themselves. Not all at once. Give me time.

Iron Heinrich is affectionate with friends, terrible to enemies. The one who is closer to his face is richly endowed with greatness and laurels. In that reflected light, the glory of Heinrich plays, shimmers. Heinrich committed a great servility around himself. Tell someone: do you know who I am? Yes, I'm an adviser to the deputy assistant! Yes, Heinrich Grigorievich himself is above us!

Here, hats off! And a tenderly admiring question: and met **yourself** ? And the answer is carelessly condescending: it happened.

Heinrich used to rush around Moscow in an open Lincoln, motorcycles flocked around like pilot fish near a shark's belly. Heinrich rushes through Moscow - the guards whistle in whistles, with striped sticks they order all the Moscow people to freeze on the spot and wait quietly until a steel cavalcade rushes past under the iridescent howl of sirens with a boom and whistle. Gaiduks on motorcycles, just look, they will start riding with whips, clicking them like tamers, and yelling mob: fall! And the sirens then were not at all the same as they are now. Now science has reached what

heights! The sound signal of the special vehicle is now gentle, caressing the ear. A big boss floats around Moscow,

rustling tires, sparkling with blue lights, delighting the ears of citizens with a crimson sound. It's a pleasure to watch and listen to. But in the times of which we are talking, the sirens were growling, croaking, ear-tearing.

Heinrich Grigoryevich himself is drowning in the back seat. Always alone. Always thoughtful. He is wearing an ashen uniform of the finest Scottish wool, in blue buttonholes - stars of the first magnitude. On the forehead - a great thought.

They reported about the innovations of the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, Commissar of State Security of the first rank, Comrade Balitsky Vsevolod Apollonych. The aforementioned Vsevolod came to the Dneproges to look out for trouble. I admired the turbines delivered from America, I was satisfied. Transformers sing and buzz - it also doesn't seem to smell like sabotage. Then he saw a thick American cable and was completely delighted. He ordered to cut off half a meter. He turned it over in his hands: neither give nor take - rubber sausage. Inside is a copper cord. He cracked that sausage on a wooden box with the enemy's inscription "Made in USA", pieces flew through the back streets. Comrade Balitsky felt quite well. Immediately he ordered to unwind a huge coil, cut it into pieces, and write out new coils from America. Comrade Balitsky armed the police of Ukraine with those copper-rubber guns.

So, having stumbled in the story about rubber sticks, with which they waved garbage in the Konotop park, do not reproach me for ignorance of the subject, do not convict me of ignorance and exaggeration. I did not invent anything, I did not confuse anything. I tell exactly as it was, without adding anything from myself, without inventing anything. Doubts about the accuracy and veracity of the description could arise simply because my people have a short memory. My people remember that Comrade Khrushchev armed the police with rubber dampers in July 1962. But Khrushchev's sticks are just the second coming. And the pioneer was comrade Balitsky, who was decades ahead of Nikita's initiative. They later canceled the

sticks, but only after it turned out that the corrupt scoundrel Balitsky was an enemy of the people and a British spy. But it will happen next year, 1937. And we are talking about 1936, when the Dnieper-HPP cable was used very widely for educational purposes. In those days, in the great and mighty language, even

a special verb appeared - "drynovat", that is, to roam the masses of the people with a

ripple. The quarters of Moscow are flying past Comrade Yagoda, the thought does not give rest: should not the great initiative of Balitsky be extended to the whole great country, from edge to edge? It would be nice, but only spiteful critics and envious people would not turn a brilliant idea against Henry himself. You don't know how your word will respond. You don't know how secret enemies will turn inside out, in what manner a great idea will be perverted, defiled, and put up against you. Iron Henry has a lot of hidden ill-wishers. Kolka Yezhov called yesterday, such a small little man, a secretary from the Central Committee, demanding the protocols of interrogations and face-to-face confrontations of Zinoviev, Kamenev, Smirnov and all sorts of others. Oh, I thought! Poke your nose into the affairs of the NKVD! Iron Heinrich to his secretary Bulanov Pavel Petrovich, waving his hand, reluctantly allowed: give something to this scumbag, let him lag behind. Whatever the child was amused by ... Oh, to play a trick on this scumbag Kolka Yezhov! Yesterday, in the Kremlin corridor, Iron Heinrich met his longtime adversary, comrade Tomsy Mikhail Pavlovich, a former member of the Politburo, the former sovereign ruler and master of all Turkestan, and he joked: "Have you been arrested yet, Mikhal Palych?" Strange. And my guys are working for you. This morning they reported that Comrade Tomsy had shot himself. There is a breed of people who do not understand jokes at all.

2

In 1922, there were seven of them at the very top: Lenin, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Stalin, Bukharin, Pyatakov.

By that time, the cult of the personality of Comrade Lenin had already germinated and flourished in a riotous color. But he himself, officially adored and deified, was isolated from the whole world and removed from power. This is to save his precious health. Comrade Stalin turned things around in such a way that the Central Committee obliged him to keep his dear Vladimir Ilyich in peace.

And Comrade Stalin, in obedience to the decision of the party, blew. Or observed. I don't know how to put it here.

For the sake of preserving the invaluable health of Comrade Lenin, Stalin's doctors forbade dear Ilyich any meetings, except meetings with Stalin. Lenin was not given any books or newspapers. In order not to worry once again, delving into our victories and accomplishments. Lenin could no longer write. The right arm and right leg are paralyzed. Why they were paralyzed, it was not customary to speak then. And in vain - the younger generation would have a science: do not take an example from dear Ilyich, otherwise paralysis will not only hurt your arms and legs, but your nose will fail.

Comrade Stalin, if it were his will, in general, all of Lenin's contacts with the outside world would have been cut off. But everything did not work out. At that time, Comrade Stalin did not have such strength. Lenin was allowed to dictate five, maybe ten minutes a day. And

he dictated a "Letter to the Congress."

Comrade Stalin overlaid Lenin like a bear in a lair. But I didn't watch a little. Didn't watch. Missed. And the contents of the

letter became known to the leading comrades in top of the party. In this letter, Lenin gave characteristics to the leaders.

Stalin, according to Comrade Lenin, concentrated immense power in his hands. Comrade Lenin was not at all sure whether Comrade Stalin would always be able to use that

power.

Trotsky, according to Lenin, is distinguished by outstanding abilities, but he is fond of the purely administrative side of things, that is, he is a soulless bureaucrat. Comrade Trotsky also fought against the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Lenin reminded him of this. And right there in the letter there is another, absolutely lethal combination of words: Trotsky's non-Bolshevism. Simply put, a terribly capable comrade, but not ours. In our party - a stranger. And whoever is not with us is the one ... And he also fought against the Central Committee. If desired,

Lenin's assessment of Trotsky can be expressed in one word: enemy! An enemy with outstanding abilities. And this is not the only assessment by Comrade Lenin of his comrade-in-arms. Lenin publicly called Trotsky Judas. Comrades Zinoviev and Kamenev in

October 1917, when the decision to seize power was made, got cold feet and decided a coup

pluck, so as not to fall under the punishing hand of the field tribunal. But how to thwart a coup d'état? Quite simply: they published plans to seize power in the newspaper. If then at the head of Russia, people with a head and strong nerves, having learned about the plans for an uprising, would hang all the Bolsheviks on the lanterns. But outstanding impotents stood at the head of Russia. That is why the coup succeeded. Zinoviev and Kamenev immediately attached themselves to the victors and became leaders. But five years after the coup, Lenin, giving characteristics to his comrades-in-arms, remembered the past and said that the October episode of Zinoviev and Kamenev was not at all an accident. To put it simply, treason and cowardice are in their blood. Nothing more can be expected from them except panic and

betrayal. Bukharin, according to Lenin, is not only the most valuable and outstanding theoretician of communism, but also the favorite of the entire party. However, his theoretical views can very doubtfully be classified as completely Marxist. To this Lenin added: he never studied and never fully understood dialectics.

You can't say it better: the most valuable and outstanding theoretician of the Marxist Party is a big muddler. And he composes what with great doubt can be attributed to this very Marxism. And what do other theorists of a lower rank compose? Besides, the party's favorite never studied... And Pyatakov is a man of outstanding

will and outstanding abilities. It's nothing that you can't rely on him in a serious political issue.

Comrades Rykov and Tomsky were also in the Politburo of the Central Committee at that moment. But Lenin did not remember them. Everything was clear to everyone even

without Lenin's comments. It followed from Lenin's letter that only Stalin had no political vices and shortcomings. Lenin only feels in his gut that Comrade Stalin in the future will not always use his immense power with sufficient caution.

No one then considered Stalin a leader, but for some reason Lenin put him in the first place. And it was about him that he said: Stalin concentrated immense power in his hands. According to Lenin's assessment, Stalin is the only one of all who cannot be called an enemy, a coward, a traitor, a muddler, an alarmist. And in serious political

you can rely on him. One reproach to him: he has a lot of strength. And fear: I wouldn't break firewood.

The letter contained the only recommendation to his party comrades-in-arms: remove Stalin from the post of General Secretary of the Central Committee! Enemies, traitors, cowards, alarmists, muddlers and those who cannot be relied upon in a serious political matter should be left behind. Take down Stalin!

Of course, after that letter, Comrade Lenin did not dictate anything more significant and important. Maybe he dictated, but his comrades-in-arms did not get it. And, having written

such a letter, Comrade Lenin could not live for a long time. And he didn't live. Comrade Stalin understood: no matter how Lenin is hidden, he strives to compose all letters. You never know what else can hit his head. Therefore, Comrade Stalin ensured complete isolation for him: Lenin fell silent forever, and Lenin's effigy was stuffed with sawdust and put on public display in a stone pyramid on Red Square, like a dead pharaoh. Three leaders remained after Lenin: Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev. Comrade

Stalin did not climb into leaders, did not shout slogans from the stands, did not enrich the golden fund of Marxism with brilliant writings. Comrade Stalin was engaged in rough work, one to which the hands of the leaders did not reach. Comrade Stalin took under firm Bolshevik control the Central Committee's Department of Distribution—accounting and distribution of personnel: to raise Ivanov, to lower Petrov. Ushkin to raise from the district to the province, and Khryushkin - on the contrary.

Each district leader is a nomenklatura of the Central Committee. That is, only the Central Committee is free to decide his fate. More precisely, one of the departments of the Central Committee - Uchraspred. And each division commander is the nomenclature of the Central Committee. And every director of a large plant. And any security officer of a sufficiently high rank - in the nomenclature. At the top, Comrade Trotsky shouts speeches, Comrade Zinoviev is weighing the options for the plan of the World Revolution, Comrade Bukharin, the favorite of the party, who has not studied anywhere, composes treatises, and from the bottom of the party, in districts and provinces, they have already figured out who is the boss in the house, from whom fate everyone depends.

Meanwhile, Comrade Stalin is busy with routine work. He is the organizer of all party conferences and congresses, and therefore he is

organizer of all elections. And the counting of votes is on his Stalinist conscience. Therefore, Comrade Stalin always knows who is for him, who is against him, and who still doubts. Comrade Stalin knows who is for Trotsky and who is against, who is for Zinoviev and Trotsky, and who is only for Zinoviev but against Trotsky. This is useful to know in order to knock

down enemies with their foreheads. And Comrade Stalin also has party control in his hands. Someone is stealing somewhere, someone is weak in the female part, and someone is in the distillery. Someone failed the plan, and someone lost the secret document. All of them, negligent, to the harsh judgment of the Party! And Comrade Stalin will ultimately decide who to punish, who to pardon. A good person can be forgiven. And the bad - in all severity! This is how the good ones are promoted, the bad ones are driven out, trampled down, and shaken

out. Weed grass off the field! But you can also forgive the bad, warning: look, the you will hold on - remember.

In the meantime, Comrade Stalin put together a "troika" - Zinoviev, Kamenev, and himself third. By common efforts, Trotsky was thrown off. After that, Comrade Stalin concluded an alliance with Bukharin. Together with Bukharin, Zinoviev and Kamenev were removed from power. After that, it was Bukharin's turn.

And now 13 years have passed since Lenin wrote "Letters to congress." Everything has changed.

Now there is only one leader in the country -

Comrade Stalin. Trotsky turned out to be an enemy of the people. No wonder the great Lenin warned: he is not ours! Trotsky was expelled from the party and from the country. He is disgraced and cursed. It is only strange why

Comrade Stalin let him go abroad? It turned out that the former leaders Zinoviev and Kamenev were also enemies of the people, murderers, terrorists, conspirators. They are being judged. And few people doubt that our fairest court in the world will issue them and their accomplices anything

less than capital punishment. Former leader Bukharin removed from all posts. He repents and cries. He calls on the party to rally around Comrade Stalin. He proclaims to the whole world that he will be terribly glad if they sho

Zinoviev and Kamenev. Bukharin calls them dogs, the most disgusting of people, human carrion. The former leader Pyatakov, a man of outstanding will and outstanding abilities, was once the head of the government of Ukraine. Now he has been demoted to First Deputy People's Commissar for Heavy Industry. Behind him is sin. Once upon a time he spoke in support of Trotsky against Stalin. He understands that Comrade Stalin will remember this for him someday. Because Pyatakov is trying. He publicly demands the death of Zinoviev and Kamenev. Meanwhile, Pyatakov's wife was arrested. And Pyatakov asked the Central Committee to give him the opportunity to personally shoot any enemies of the people: from Zinoviev and Kamenev to his own wife, inclusive.

A man of outstanding will and outstanding abilities did not understand that there is someone to shoot enemies without him. This was clearly explained to him. But he still found a way! There is a public prosecutor Comrade Vyshinsky. At the trial of Zinoviev, Kamenev, Smirnov and the like, he accuses on behalf of the state, but why not speak on behalf of society, on behalf of the broad masses of the people! Why not tell the country and the world about how the Zinoviev-Kamenev-Smirnov-Mrachkovites spied and harmed, how they killed Comrade Kirov, how they organized an assassination attempt on their most beloved person, on the great comrade Stalin, how they prepared to overthrow the power of the workers and peasants? Why not expose all the other conspirators sitting on the black bench next to Zinoviev, Kamenev, Smirnov? Pyatakov wrote a letter to Comrade Stalin and received an answer: well done, right, come on! Here it is - an

opportunity to excel! Here it is, a chance to make amends for the mistakes of the past. Comrade Pyatakov

composed an accusatory speech and sent it to Comrade Stalin. Comrade Stalin liked that

speech very much. And ordered Comrade Stalin to acquaint the defendants Zinoviev, Kamenev and Smirnov with the contents of the accusatory speech. And they didn't even like that speech. And they said in unison: Oh, you bastard! Did you want to drown us? Will not work! Together with us, you bastard, you will drown.

And all three of them announced that Pyatakov himself was an enemy, a traitor, a traitor, a conspirator, a Trotskyist, a poisoner of wells and an arsonist.

crops, German, Japanese, Polish and Romanian spy.

Pyatakov did not yet know this. Having received gratitude from Comrade Stalin for his irreconcilable position, for fiery denunciations of enemies, Comrade Pyatakov departed for Yalta, to the sanatorium of the Council of People's Commissars, to restore his health.

3

The work of an assistant performer is not dusty. The first step is to pull the client out of the cell and deliver it to the place of verification. And this is 55 pairs of steps along the corridor and 13 steps down. So that the client does not flutter, it is necessary not to drive him with a whole crowd, but to lead him with only one supervisor, it seems, not to execution at all, but to some additional clarification.

Death row cells in Lefortovo are locked with two bolts, with two locks. One key is with the head of the prison, the other is with the corps. So even if the head of the Lefortovo prison decides to release a suicide bomber, he himself will not be able to do it. The consent of the other person is required. The chief does

not trust the key to anyone, so that a copy is not taken. And the corps officer also does not trust anyone, even his boss. What trust is there: the condemned fades away, you sit in his place, instead of him they will drag you to the basement with sawdust.

Both the head of the prison and the corps hand over each sentenced to a special team against receipt. Zmееed signed in two magazines. The chief, each with his own key, unlocks the locks and leaves. What happens next is none of their business. A special team in Lefortovo works, but is not subordinate to the head of the prison. The special team is directly subordinate to the commandant's department of the NKVD.

The snake-eater with the overseer opens the heavy door, behind it is a grate with a lock. This is designed so that the prisoner does not rush to the one who enters first. As soon

as the locks rumbled, the prisoner was supposed to turn around without commands facing the wall, hands behind his head, palms out. This is so that it does not slash with a nail or a razor. He has nothing to lose.

Not everyone at first turns their hands on the back of the head outward. But there are good teachers in Lefortovo. In an instant they will teach: cover your ears with your palms. Now turn your palms back. Just? Just. And with a rubber stick, implanted in the NKVD by comrade Balitsky, - in the liver! To be remembered better.

However, the prisoner has nothing to hide in his hands. The cell is completely empty. Along the wall is a wide wooden bench on concrete supports. This is for you and a sofa, and an armchair, and a bed. Mattress, pillow, blanket - in complete absence. To not breed bedbugs. The walls are lined with boards. The wood is not solid. This is so that he does not lay hands on himself. And then there were cunning ones - the heads themselves were smashed against the walls or the floor. This maneuver does not work here. You won't be beaten to death one time. They will not give a second attempt - they will put on a strait shirt. And the shirt is leather. Hands and feet will be tied - you won't tremble. They'll throw a couple of buckets of water at you too. As long as the skin is wet, it's good. And as it begins to dry out, the howl of a wolf will twist

Total.

Everyone who enters such a cell is warned that it is better not to beat your head against the wall, it will be worse. The

key to the inner lattice is with the overseer. Even if the chief and the corps conspire to release the prisoner, then this will not work out. Because they do not have access to the third key. - Prisoner Smirnov, come!

Approached. - Turn around! Come on hands! He

turned his back, stuck both

hands between the bars. The Serpent Eater buttoned up shiny American bracelets. Signed up again. Only after that the overseer clicked the lock, the bars creaked: come out.

The prisoner Smirnov is silent. The snake-eater and the supervisor are also silent. Only Zmееed Smirnov lightly shoved, they say, go. Went. We walked down the corridor and down the stairs. Snake-eater pushed the door to the office, nodded to the warden: everything, free, then we ourselves. There

are two doors in the office. They enter into one, take them out through the second, or rather, they drag them out. There is a double window in the brick wall. The entire office is flooded with sunlight. The prisoner Smirnov already closed his eyes and writhed in such brightness. Weaned. Between the two frames in the powerful walls, the lattice is forever inscribed. But she does not spoil the view. On the window

curtain with faded patterns. There is a geranium flower on the windowsill. In the middle of the office, an indestructible bastion is a stationery table. At the table in an armchair - the head of the commandant's special team, Comrade Krainy. In the corner is a safe. Above Comrade Extreme is a huge portrait of the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, General Commissar of State Security, Comrade Genrikh Grigoryevich Yagoda. Before Comrade Krainy, Smirnov's personal matter. On the right hand is a pack of "Kazbek" and matches. On the left hand - a bag. Comrade Extreme gingerbread printed gnaws.

Snake Eater unfastened the handcuffs, pushed Smirnov to a stool screwed to the floor: sit down.

The Wyrmeater himself stood behind. At the wall. Next to him are two more henchmen - Ryndin and

Reut. Comrade put aside the extreme gingerbread half-eaten, chewed Thoughtfully, he opened the case:

- Full name ... - Smirnov Ivan

Nikitich. The Snake-Eater turned pale, pressed himself against the wall: but now, right in a couple of minutes, this man will be

killed. - Year of birth? - Eighty-one. Ryazan province. Sanya Reut winks at his friends, nods at the Snake-eater: now the poor thing will faint, white as a swan. - Last position? - People's

Commissar for Communications of the USSR. Kolya Ryndin also glances at the Snake-Eater: the comrade is rather well I got to that job, not for Senka's hat, not for Julio sombrero ... - Who was before that?

Smirnov straightened his shoulders, proudly threw a word: - I, Ivan Smirnov, was the chairman of the Siberian Revolutionary Committee! Comrade

Smirnov is glorified throughout Siberia for his bestial bloodthirstiness. The whole country knew him as the Siberian Trotsky. Siberia will not forget the Smirnov executions for centuries. On the Yenisei, Smirnov floated rafts with hanged men like boats. He liked to burn villages in winter, so that those who did not burn out would die in the cold. —

After Siberia?

- After Siberia, he was sent by the party to Petrograd. He was secretary of the Petrograd Committee and the Northwestern Bureau of the Central Committee.

- At Zinoviev's? -

Zinoviev. Comrade

Smirnov Peter cleaned no worse than Siberia. By order of Zinoviev, he rid the city of the exploitative element. At the same time, the apartments of the tsarist generals and ministers were vacated for new rulers. Smirnov's blow - on the former bourgeoisie, but along the way got to everyone else, from Kronstadt sailors to former officers, from engineers to street tramps. With child homelessness, with speculation, with the syphilis epidemic, Smirnov fought with his favorite methods - all the same mass executions.

And now he is sitting on a stool with the back of his head to the Serpent Eater. Zmeeed is familiar with comrade Smirnov almost personally. Siberian villages are huge. If you set it on fire from one end, so that it goes with the wind, it will burn for a long time if you do not extinguish it. The village of Ferlyuevo, where the free people of the Shirmanovs had lived since the time of Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich, was burned by Smirnov in passing. For some reason, Smirnov did not take hostages in the village of Ferlyuevo, and did not shoot anyone. Only the guys with his machine-gun fire brought down those who tried to put out the fire. All the Shirmanovs were put to death. Only one juvenile remained. He went to the forest people, together with them he caught Chekists, commissars, food detachments, flogged his belly and stuffed it with grain: gorge yourself, you bastards, with Siberian bread! There he was called the Serpent-Eater. For special anger. The detachment died in an unequal battle, and the Serpent Eater wriggled out, left by wolf paths. In St. Petersburg, he went to the homeless. And there again Smirnov! Slightly snake-eater under the firing squad missed.

Oh, if only Comrade Smirnov knew who was grinding his teeth behind his back! Serpent is

completely bad. Tomit, as before losing consciousness. He can't find a place for his hands, either he will unfasten the collar, or he will clamp his own mouth with his palm ... He felt a leather bag with something hard on his belt, realized that this was a French puzzle, for some reason it became easier ... Interrogation, meanwhile, flows as usual. -

Convictions?

"First verdict in twenty-seven. Three years of exile for Trotskyism. He broke with Trotskyism and publicly condemned it. The second sentence in the thirty-third year. For the Zinoviev opposition. Five years of the SLON - Solovetsky Special Purpose Camps. The deadline did not have time to hold out - another process. Together with Zinoviev and Kamenev - the highest measure of criminal punishment ...

- Well, that's another way to say it. Our government is people's, humane... Did you ask for pardon from the workers and peasants? -

He asked ... He sees the Snake-eater: already the back of Smirnov's head tensed.

Comrade Krainy reassured me: "There is no answer

yet... Don't you smoke?" - I do not smoke. - Well, eat some gingerbread. Smirnov did not even believe. How

many years did not gnaw gingerbread. - Well, take it! Smirnov got up, extended his hand, bent over the table. This is the most comfortable position for attackers from behind. The table is wide. To reach the bag, you need to bend over in half, bend over with your whole body. The balance is almost completely broken. This is the most unstable position of the body. Take it with bare hands. Smokers - "Kazbek", non-smokers - gingerbread. And the signal at hand: as soon as the hand stretches forward, rush at once, flippers behind the back, and knit with wire.

Smirnov's hand did not reach the gingerbread. The snake-eater jumped onto his back at a Ural lynx, hacked at his fingers with brass knuckles, and then, with the same brass knuckles, at his ribs. The left jerked by the shoulder, turning the hated face towards him, and smacked between the eyes in the bridge of the nose. Smirnov collapsed. Snake-eater stool by the leg - crush your head. The stool did not give in - it was firmly welded to the floor.

Henchmen need to knit Smirnov, but there is nothing to knit here. He lies in a bag of potatoes in a pool of blood. Henchmen rushed to the Serpent-eater, wringing their hands:

crazy? Comrade Krainy himself jumped out from behind the table, a bag of gingerbread hooked, waking up on the floor.

Comrade Sinister, the perpetrator on duty, from the execution door: what is this noise? Sinister, dressed like a pilot, looks like a butcher. From the pilot he has a leather helmet, motorcycle goggles,

gloves with bells to the elbows. And from the butcher - a wide long leather apron.

Comrade Krainy

swears. How not to swear - the whole floor is stained with blood. For the death massacre, the adjacent chamber is defined. Why bother in the office? The commander of the firing squad touched

the prisoner's face with the tip of his boot and turned it into the light. Doesn't breathe. Is he alive, no, not understand.

The snake-eater was pressed against the wall, bending his head with a grip deadly. Commander look: what to do?

Comrade Extreme waved: let him go. And Sinister, kicking Smirnov with his boot: "Looks like he's been

killed." Shoot for fidelity. The assistants picked up Smirnov's body and dragged it down the stairs to the basement with sawdust.

4

In a large clean prison room with two tall windows the entire commandant's special group was assembled. They stand with their heads bowed. Comrade Extreme splatters with anger. — Comrades, we have an emergency in our special group. Our new comrade, the Snake Eater, violated the instructions, rushed at the condemned man and struck him with blows, which led to loss of consciousness or death. The execution of the sentence had to be carried out in the conditions of the unconscious state of the condemned or even after his death. According to the instructions, we are obliged at the last moment, already on the ladder of execution, to ask the question whether the sentenced person wants to say something. The snake-eater deprived us of such an opportunity. For the display of incontinence, for violating the instructions, I declare the Serpent-eater a severe reprimand. I will raise the issue of expulsion from the special group before the leadership. All. Free for today.

Comrade Krainy came out, slamming the door.

Behind him, the performer on duty, Comrade Sinister, pulled, closing the door behind him tightly: -

What have you done?

- And

what? "Consider: Zinoviev, Kamenev and their closest henchmen have been condemned. There are 16 enemies in total. All of them received a well-deserved and long-awaited supreme sentence by all the working people. Today Zinoviev and Kamenev will be slapped at the Lubyanka in the presence of Comrade Yagoda. But for some reason the rest were sent to different firing points in

Moscow. What is this for? - Don't know. - At the trial, it turned out that Smirnov was Trotsky's envoy to the Soviet Union. And he admitted it. He was brought to us for execution. And then we have a new person in the group. Yagoda himself sent

it to us. For what, I ask? - Don't know. - For control! And the nickname to him is the Snake Eater! He said that he had never killed anyone, and you believed it. Yes, look at his face. On grips. In vain does he walk with brass knuckles? Did he turn pale and tremble? Yes, he could not wait until the murder dorvetsya! He splattered your office with Smirnov's blood, and you threatened him with expulsion. You are right about everything! Any person who has been sentenced to death, realizing that he has ended up in a firing cellar, that this is the end of his life, can say something very important, something that he had previously concealed. Therefore, the instructions include a requirement at the last moment to ask if the sentenced person wants to say anything. The snake-eater violated the instructions. You punished him right before the formation. But! They are probably sending secret agents to us in order to have material for each of us. You, Commander, are right. But you can twist your act in such a way

that you defend the central Trotskyist from the wrath of the people.

"Understood," said Comrade Krainiy. Once you understand, act. - I'm acting! Call the checkpoint so that none of ours will be let out of the gate. No one has gone far yet. Gather a group immediately. And the caretaker to me,

The group gathered in the same room. Lined up. Fierce comrade Extreme. - Snake!
- !! - Break

down! — There are
out of order. Snake-eater chopped off three steps forward,
froze. The system is silent. And Comrade Extreme is silent. Slowly paces along the building. Looks into everyone's eyes like a thirsty vampire. Then he suddenly stopped and turned

around. - We are all talking about class instinct, about proletarian intransigence. But the Serpent-eater did what I kept myself and you all with such difficulty. It would be necessary for you, Zmeeeeed, to punish approximately for violating the instructions. So I do. You have not been reprimanded. I have no such right - to leave violations without punishment. You are punished. But I look at your violation with a bright paternal look. Break more! You won't be left without punishment. But here's to you from me personally. Comrade Rainy took out a watch on a gold chain from his vest pocket and gave it to him. Then

he could not restrain himself, hugged. - To our new combat comrade Zmeeeeed for the hatred shown to the enemies of the working class, for diligence in the service, I declare gratitude. I will petition the higher management for a cash bonus and a free ticket to the resort. In our group, comrades, a new fighter has appeared, in which class anger boils and bubbles. Proletarian bitterness some of you did not appreciate. But he simply could not wait for the moment when he had to rush at the enemy. We, comrades, will wipe out the Trotskyist-Zinoviev gang. We would have more of such ebullient and powerful as our new colleague. Our regiment has arrived. Please love and favor brother! The door to the next room flung open - on a long table of bottles

there was a whole squadron and a modest bachelor's snack: cucumbers, tomatoes, sauerkraut, fried potatoes, boiled sausage, striped pink bacon, herring with onions, sprats in oil, slices of black bread.

The snake-eater came out of the Lefortovo gates. Where is the path to take? He hasn't decided this yet. He jumped on the footboard of a tram: where he would take it. Wind of dusty August - in the face. The ringing of the oncoming tram - in the soul. He never rode the same tram from one stop to the next. He always jumped on the go, on the go and jumped off. And jumped on another. He always confused the trail. I don't know why myself. So the service taught.

Jumped off one. Jumped on another, on the third. And he ended up somewhere very close to the Kremlin. Sat down on a bench. Thoughtful. Then he resolutely moved to the Alexander Garden. He knew that at the Borovitsky Gate in an inconspicuous corner, where for some reason there was no guard, there was a simple mailbox hanging. There are only two words on it: TO COMRADE STALIN.

Immediately make a reservation that there is not one mailbox, but four at once. On one is the inscription - "Around Moscow", on the other - "Around the country", on the third - "Foreign". But the fourth is just for Comrade Stalin. The boxes are arranged in such a way that any normal person can approach them, and so that no outsider can see into which box the letter was thrown. The people of Moscow know that corner, they throw letters into those boxes. You can't follow everyone. For three days the Snake-Eater wore an envelope in his bosom. Now decided.

Approached. He lifted the green lid, looked around, and dropped his gray envelope. Nobody has seen? Obviously nobody. Now we must leave quickly. Traces are confusing. Jumped on a cab: drive! Where to drive? Drive ahead! He poured a handful of silver, jumped off - and along the alleys! And on the tram footboard! Only then, catching his breath, the Snake-Eater realized that it was not without reason

that the mailbox was in an inconspicuous place. This is for fools, for those who think that there is no surveillance. And it is. Without him, and even in such a place, you can not do. It is clear, like the dawn of April, that everyone who has thrown a letter into this box is being watched. The Serpent-eater understands that the fidgety ones have followed him. Yes, but they didn't attack him. The Serpent Eater leaves them by the well-known, long-chosen and proven separation routes. There is no one behind him. I'm sure of it. If the letters to Stalin are addressed, then Stalin's people can keep an eye on those who drop

anonymous letters. There is nothing for the Serpent Eater to be afraid of such surveillance. He wrote a letter to Stalin, naming himself, leaving his address. But Stalin has many enemies. The same Yagoda, for example. Enemies too

they can follow this place, identify those who send signals to Stalin. Here they are dangerous. It is from them that we must leave, confusing the trace.

7

Quiet in the barracks on the runway. Someone snores after a night shift. Someone, on the contrary, before duty. But most of the beds are empty - people are at work. In the corner, only Cricket

bespectacled. I saw the Serpent Eater and with a book - to him. It seems to show something interesting decided. Sat next to. And quietly like this: - They are waiting for you. Whoever you yaknesh about me, I'll

kill. - Who waits? - Get out the gate. At the station, cross all the tracks. Between echelons, check that there is no tail. On the other side, behind the warehouses, is a beer stall. You know? - I know.

- There's

an uncle on a motorcycle waiting for you. Say, from Cricket. - Understood. Wyrmeater

went out the gate. Walked along the fences. He bent down to tie his lace. This position is comfortable for looking around, but at the same time stealthily not looking back. No one seemed to follow him out of the gate. Nobody around. The station was full of freight trains. But quiet. He dived under the car, under another. Here you can openly look around without arousing suspicion. After all, all normal people turn their heads, crossing the railway lines. It's wonderful for the Serpent Eater: he didn't have time to get from the Kremlin to Krasnaya Presnya,

but they are already waiting for him. The first combat group of the Fifth Department of the GUGB, and in it the Stalinist little man was hiding. Who would have thought of a bespectacled Cricket? Tikhonya is quiet, and then he started what a speech: I'll kill him, he says!

Snake-Eater darted through the lanes, went out to the stall. There is a huge uncle standing there in a leather helmet, glasses, in a long black raincoat. It is very similar to the duty performer.

Without waiting for the cherished words from the Serpent-eater, he put his helmet and goggles on the motorbike nodded: sit down, just hold on tight. Do not

recognize the Snake-Eater in that helmet, in those glasses.

With his right heel, the uncle hit the lever so much that the motorcycle roared like a recalcitrant devil, even jumped up, sneezing with gasoline smoke that smelled very smelly and nasty. And carried them along the echoing cobblestone pavement. Roar for three miles. Wind in the ears and whistling. The Serpent-Eater clung to the mighty back, harboring horror.

Chapter 4

1

A mischievous girl glides from tree to tree, from bush to bush. She is very interested in where the Lizard lives. The Lizard rattled the gate. Let the dog off the chain. I wandered into the garden and there under a tree

and lay down. And the sky is turning gray. She's running out of time. Fortunately, it turned out that the Lizard is almost a neighbor to her. She rushed home. The fence went over. And to the attic. She dropped the weight on the chain.

Now we need another weapon. More powerful. There is a rusty chain in the corner under the crates. Such chains are used to tie tractors to telegraph poles so that they do not roll into the field by themselves while the tractor drivers are drunk. Good chain. It's probably been here for a long time. The chain is power. She armed herself with a chain, like a proletarian in a mortal battle. And here is the guitar in the dust. The guitar is romantic. But our girl is not up to romance.

She was always taught that killing is not good. But killing is not good only if the abstract x kills the equally abstract y. But if Komsomol volunteers with restless hearts kill a plowman, then this is very good. For the sake of social justice, why not kill? And it's even better when our good ones kill the bad ones to the romantic rhythm: "To give the land in Grenada to the peasants." We take away the land from our peasants, and we promise to give it back to the Spanish. Dialectics. She plucked a guitar string, went down from the attic - and to her grandfather. Grandfather

Makar sleeps in the garden, like Newton under an apple tree.

Pushed grandfather,
stirred up. Grandfather woke up alarmed: - Eh?

What? Makhnovists in the city? —

No, grandfather, calm down. Calm down. We are still with the reds. Better tell me, grandfather, how to calm the dog so that it does not rush?

The grandfather turned away disappointed, exhaled falling asleep: - Fill the bull's horn with oil, darkness. What do they teach you in school.

Went up to the attic again. I found a bull horn among many amazing things. She ran to the cellar, stuffed her horn with butter and over the fence.

2

One lane. Another. It is a pity that the sky is very gray with a green stripe in the east.

Here is the Lizard House. And the dog chokes with rage. Not a dog, but an abomination on legs. All in spots. Not from one dad came, but from a friendly team. Well, everything is clear with him - a son of a bitch, what can you take from him. She threw a bull's horn to the son of a bitch. The dog smells oil, licks the horn with its tongue, gnaws with its teeth. But know, having overcome my essay, that the dog is not able to gnaw at the bull's horn. It is clear that the correct escort, guard or search dog is trained not to take food from the wrong hands. This number with a trained dog does not work. But the Lizard's dog was evil, like himself, but not trained, so the dog took up the bull's horn, not suspecting that the venture would not end with success: the elasticity and viscosity of the bull's horn exceeds the biting ability of any son of a bitch.

She walks right next to the dog's slobbering mouth, near small sharp teeth, and her eyes look up to the sky: a quivering girl, tender. The dog growled with a terrible growl. Too bad for a skinny girl. It's so scary that it's indescribable. It's so scary that at least give up the whole idea and don't go to dances anymore. The dog bristled, the hair on the back of his neck stood on end and saliva in nasty tufts. The dog hisses, he would tear the girl, but he really wants to lick the oil, for no amount of gingerbread from his dog's paws will that horn be released. The girl does not take away the prey, well, okay, knocks by, well, go ahead, don't touch my goodies.

She sneaks past the dog, and the chain is in her hand: you, doggie, just jump, I cut it between the ears - you will tip over, all the paws will twitch into the sky.

But the dog did not jump. So she went into the garden. So the Lizard sleeps under a tree, snoring softly. A wonderful apple tree above the Lizard. White filling. Konotop is famous for this variety of apples. At the end of August, young people go crazy from the smell of Konotop apple trees, as in spring from the heady sweetness of bird cherry.

She plucked a blade of grass, tickled the Lizard in the nose. Lizard waved it off. Still tickled. Turned away again, turned away. She is still. The Lizard cursed, raised his head, looked around. It was then that she threw a loop around his throat and threw it. And dragged on.

I consider it my duty to report that a loop of a guitar string on the throat, if pulled quickly and tightly, can ruin sleep. "Ah, Lizard, honey, don't flutter. The lizard wheezes.

And don't pull the handles. Oh, don't pull. You pulled yours. Now it's my time. Listen, remember. Five hours later you wake up in the city hospital number seven. In the surgical department. Telling how a sixteen-year-old girl beat you is completely useless. Why ruin your reputation? Say that there were many healthy men. Band of unknowns.

"Khhhh," the Lizard wheezes.

- So, having come to your senses, demand Vaska-garbage to you. Through him you will convey your apologies to me. If I don't get your apology on the dance floor at 8 pm, you won't live until midnight. You know me well now. I keep my promises. "Khhhh," the Lizard wheezes. "I

really didn't like your jokes

about rape. - Pokhrshutil, - the Lizard wheezes. - A very inappropriate joke. This is not a joke. I'm not trying

for myself now, I'm for all the other girls. So now I'm going to make sure that rape jokes never enter your head again. Here's a pillow for your teeth. Be a man, try not to yell. This will be your last act as a man. After that, you will no longer be a man. I will provide you with eternal neutrality. Well, hold on. And don't wake the county. With one hand he pulls the string around his neck, with the other - the chain. Not particularly convenient. Therefore, I decided that the first blow should

be soothing. Chopped with a tractor chain. A spasm pulled the Lizard, distorted its muzzle, filled it with blue lips, drowning out its cry in the very throat, not allowing it to escape from the throat. It would seem: the teenager is not formed. So what's the hit? Correct remark. But we must take into account the severity of the chain and

multiply it by inspiration, which sometimes visits gentle poetic souls. And the blow was inspirational. In addition, the

length of the chain must be multiplied by the accuracy of the strike. She didn't beat her anyhow, but with a complete understanding of anatomy. These subsequent blows were just random, like a flail on a sheaf in order to knock out more grains, and the first was intentional: neutralizing. She threshed the

Lizard, who after that it was not entirely accurate to call the Lizard by the male name, and - home. Past the son of a bitch, gnawing a horn, past sleeping houses and impregnable fences. To the attic. Sleep.

3

She fell asleep immediately and deeply. She slept long and calmly. I woke up in the evening. This time she dressed in a bright dress: why the color of mourning? Gotta have fun. Life is so short. She held in her hand a weight of cast lead on a rawhide leather strap. She sighed and put it down. Decided to go dancing. Without any weapons. The weight was good for a sudden blow. The second time will not work: while you swing, you will be pierced three times with a lance. So without a weight, and

even without a bag. Here is the park. Everything in it is familiar to the last leaf. He walks in the park, the punks part, whispering. Her eyes pierce from all angles. In mystical terror. She walks through the park and she is sad: neither Asp can be seen, nor the Lizard, nor many of their entourage. Only Vaska-garbage is still right there, at the combat post. True, the cigarette has already come unstuck and fallen off.

Vaska saw our girl, he hurries to greet.
- Hello. - Hello, Vaska. - Allow me to inquire, with what did you chop up Asp

yesterday? "He slipped and fell. Scratched on a tree. -
Yes. So it was. It serves him right. The guys wanted to talk. yyyyyyyyyyyyyyy. And he, a fool, got to fight. You are right. The prosecutor's office initiated a case, so Aspid asked to refrain.

He says it's all his own fault. And he says hello to you. His ribs are broken at the back and something else. In a word, inflammation of the inside.

- What a pity. "That's

just the way it is. And the Lizard asked to convey an apology. Yesterday, some gang caught him and swept him away: if you touch our girl, they say, we'll kill him. He was so delicately swept away. Elle left. The doctor told him so: "You will live, but you don't want to kiss."

Here I must note that if things have come to the point of telling the truth, then the truth is that Vaska the trash at that moment did not say anything about kissing. He uttered some completely different word, but after so many years I don't remember what

exactly.

In another situation, our trembling girl would have been embarrassed, she would have blushed like an apple. But that was not the moment. She was now seething with calm, icy fury. She looks at the ground, smiling weakly at something. - So, how

did you decide? Do you forgive Lizard? How to convey to him? Here she raised her head, opened her eyelashes, and lashed Vaska with the rubbish with a glance from her blue eyes. Vaska stepped back. His mouth suddenly dried up as the Aral wind dries the bare steppe. Vaska understood that now she would cut him with the very thing. And it would be for that! I want to look at her hands. And it's scary to take your eyes off her eyes. Vaska had never seen so much anger in one eye. He would have to throw a joint at her hands with one eye. And scary. It seems that in her hands he did not see anything, not even a bag. But after all, the circus magician also doesn't seem to have anything in his hands, and then, lo and behold, a pistol. Terribly Vaska absolutely. Did something wrong. And do not understand what exactly. It didn't seem to hurt her in any way. It seems he came up with greetings, with an apology from the Lizard. And on you. Vaska retreated another step, stumbled, and either sat down or fell on his knees. The two of them. Nobody around. But from all the alleys, hundreds of pairs of eyes are now drilling them. Very arrogant, too. shame. But Vaska is not up to shame. Vaska needs to save his skin. He understands: yesterday she was joking, today she will kill. And some kind of gang showed up in the district: whoever touches it, they crush their eggs. For what? For what, you ask? And illumined him. I suddenly realized that she did not need the Yascherova's apologies. She ordered the Lizard to apologize only so that he, Vaska, would have a hint, they say, you, cudgel, should apologize, and not jus

hint. Understood, and felt better immediately. Well, ask so ask. nothing, tongue won't break off:

- Citizen, you already me that. Forgive me if it's not

So...

Get up, Vaska. Look disgusting. People around. Vaska

looked around. True, people are all around and silence over the park.

Everyone stared at him. Why watch? He's not on his knees. Just a broken leg.

Stumbled. - You, Vaska, you

know, I like to walk alone at night. - I know. I know. How

not to know? - So, for a change,

you will take me home in the evenings

see off. Like an honor guard. -

Understood. How about we

accompany. "And tell yours that I am not offended. Today my guys will not beat anyone in Konotop. All. While free.

Vaska jumped back, and she went to dance.

It was her farewell party. She never danced again in her life. I swore.

4

Passenger train "Odessa - Moscow". Green wagons. Steam locomotive - series "IS". For the dull - Joseph Stalin. Such a powerful locomotive. For freight trains - black "FD", Felix Dzerzhinsky, for passenger trains - green "IS". Cherkasy, Zolotonosha, Pyryatin, Pryluky, Bakhmach, Konotop. Train stop 10 minutes. Passengers are asked to take their seats, mourners are asked to get out of the cars. The grandfather hugged his granddaughter. She waved a blue handkerchief to

him from the window. Her car is beautiful. Not like everyone else. She is used to being beautiful. There was one in the compartment. No neighbors. But this is strange. Other times, nothing special. But in the last days of August, all the trains are full. Especially those that go to Moscow. I was only surprised at the unusualness of such as a whole

crowd of passengers tumbled into the car. Hefty all the men, loud-mouthed, with heavy suitcases. They blocked the passage. These are the tenth, eleventh and

twelfth? So let's go here! And immediately cramped as in the Central Market. Like a herd of elephants broke into the third compartment. And the neighboring ones too. They won't push through. The locomotive roared, the train jerked, the compartment door slammed shut.

- Citizen Streletskaia? Anastasia Andreevna? Birth 13

April 1920? You are under arrest.

Her hands - click - and buttoned. The

train had just left the station, and then the brakes creaked. Her gray blouse

was thrown over her hands so that the steel American bracelets were not visible.

And politely under her arms from the car
withdraw.

- Clear the corridor for all passengers! Who the fuck is told! Release! Shut the door, stupid! I'll pinch my nose! Next to the passenger train, another

locomotive puffs - also of the IS series. And one wagon with him. No windows. Girl Nastya from one train to another. And her suitcase there too. And a noisy gang follows. Their suitcases only seemed heavy while they were being dragged into the car. This is for the show. And they carried them out easily, like empty cardboard boxes.

Now let the Odessa-Moscow passenger train wait.

And a steam locomotive with one carriage rushed to Moscow. Without stops.

5

The prison wagon is brand new. Clean. The whole inside smells like paint. And completely empty. If the convoy is not counted. The convoy - six hefty men and three aunts. And one escort. Half of the
carriage is for guards, the

other half is divided into six cells. But only one of them is busy. Occupied by the only prisoner of sixteen years. Nastya was searched by two aunts in the blue berets of the State Security. They searched with a sense of duty. With pleasure. One aunt - nothing in appearance. The second is a pure witch. The first has one cube in the buttonholes. The second has two sleepers. boss.

After the search, no one interrogated Nastya. With her, no one at all
what he didn't talk about. Silence was the answer to a couple of her questions.

No one has charged her either. But Nastya already knows her sins: she inflicted serious bodily harm on two, crippled one to disability. She had known for a long time that if she made a

mistake in an argument, she must admit her mistake immediately and decisively, without persisting in stupidity. But if she did something indecent, then she cannot be recognized. They say different things about recognition. Recognition lightens the punishment, and non-recognition completely eliminates it. And those who were imprisoned believe that recognition only eases the pangs of conscience, but the punishment aggravates. How much will decrease in one place, so much will inevitably arrive in another. This is the great Russian scientist Mikhail Lomonosov discovered. This is the law of conservation. It is taught at school. So why lighten the conscience, aggravating the coming punishments? Mikhailo Vasilyevich was a

smart man. And his last name is telling. In all scientific disputes he won; opponents knew: it's better not to argue with this - it will break the nose, or even break the skull.

One thing is not clear to her, how did the State Security manage to find out about her exploits? The fact that she crippled the Lizard is known only by the Lizard. And he has no interest in talking about it. And there are no witnesses. If the Lizard tells this to anyone, then who will believe him?

Everything is clear with Aspid and his gang. It's hard to blame Nastya here. This is pure self defense. However, there was no attack. But it was clearly planned and prepared. And she struck a preemptive blow. If Aspid and his roots tell how it was, then they will be laughed at. And how could this one girl crush them? And what court would believe them? About the gang that allegedly protects her, Nastya herself

started a rumor. If asked, then she has an answer ready. What gang? Has anyone seen this band? And who will prove her connection with some mythical gang? Where did that gang come from and where did it go, if there are no traces of it either in Konotop or in the vicinity?

The grasping investigator immediately begins to work, not giving the prisoner the opportunity to come to his senses. But there is no investigator in the prison car.

Why is this? Why isn't anyone questioning her?

And where are they taking her? And for what? If a crime has been committed in Konotop, then it is necessary to sort it out. Again, a strange thing: in Konotop, as, indeed, everywhere with us, scuffle does not belong to the category of crimes. Just think, someone beat someone, someone broke someone's rib, knocked out their teeth, or, for example, crushed some tender places. Well, for this, immediately go to jail and plant? Then all at once. But you can't transfer everyone! No, there's something wrong here.

And why is it not the police who are dealing with her case, but the State Security?

And why so many convoys? And why a dress-up carnival? Why did people in civilian clothes arrest her? Why did they take her so that no one saw? It was easier for the garbage to knock at the house of grandfather Makar at dawn. There was a whole operation right there: they sold her such a ticket so that there were no strangers in the compartment. And the train was stopped after as he left the station.

And why such an honor: a personal locomotive with a personal prison wagon? And why is the car brand new?

He is new, apparently, because somewhere at the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs there is a special reserve of prison transport. Should sudden mass landings happen, the capacities are prepared in advance. Sometimes, for a special occasion, you can use one trailer from the special reserve borrow.

If so, then the picture is quite strange. Prison wagons travel around the country along certain routes, according to certain schedules. And, presumably, not empty. And if so, then they should not be completely clean inside. They should be fragrant with appropriate aromas. And who has the right to take a prison car

from the special reserve of the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs? Here two incomprehensible moments

merged into one understandable. The first incomprehensible moment: there are many guards, but there is no investigator who could, taking advantage of the suddenness of the arrest and the confusion of the prisoner, find out a lot of things that you cannot get out of a person who was given time to recover, gather his thoughts, get used to the situation.

The second incomprehensible moment: a locomotive and a whole wagon from a special reserve to transport one prisoner.

An understandable conclusion: a very important boss who does not trust either ordinary or even very important investigators will personally deal with her case.

If so, then a new ambiguity arises: why will the big boss deal with her? She has not committed any state crimes yet.

There can only be two explanations. First, she was mistaken for someone else. Second: they cut down the forest - the chips fly. Somewhere something grandiose is happening, to which she personally has nothing to do. But the historical process also captures those who would like to step aside from it. They are sawing a huge oak log at the sawmill, a snail on the log ... That snail did no harm to anyone. Just on the wrong log

that moment turned out to be.

Nastya introduced herself as a snail, a slug. She didn't like it. Then she saw herself as a frisky red squirrel. Such a one will not sit on a log until she, poor thing, is sawn in two. This one, slowly, will run away with light jumps: jump-jump. Escape from the prison car she will not burn out. Therefore, I decided to save my strength until the moment that can

introduce yourself.

For this you need to sleep. Sleep on bare boards. She knew how to sleep. There are many ways. But they do not work for everyone and not always. And she had a flawless way. It is necessary to see a clean forest lake with reeds, with white sand along the bottom. You need to see light ripples on clear water, a yellow leaf floating like a boat. And a stone falling into the water ... Bultykh! And to the bottom. And circles on the water. This picture must be kept in front of you, not allowing other thoughts and images to push it aside. And another stone. Here it flies... Here it touches the water... Here is the spray... It goes to the bottom... It goes... It goes... And circles... And circle...

The snake-eater knocked on the door. Opened timidly. Opposite Stalin. Not at all like the portraits.

— Hello, comrade Snake-eater.

Hello, Comrade Stalin. - Come in, sit down. The room at the

Stalinist dacha is quite simple. Stalin shook hands with the Serpent. The Serpent Eater turns away a little, gives Comrade Stalin the opportunity to wipe his hand imperceptibly with a handkerchief and imperceptibly toss the handkerchief into the wastebasket. But Comrade Stalin does not wipe his hand my.

— I have received your letter. You wrote me a strange message. Word and deed. And what is this word? And what's the deal? Do you want to drink? Snake-

eater licked his suddenly dry lips: - I want to. —

What to

pour? There is Georgian wine, Armenian cognac, Russian vodka with mountain ash, Ukrainian gorylka with pepper... -

Gorylki, Comrade Stalin. - I

drink with you. Cheers. We will, Comrade Stalin. Some

people think that the gorilka is such a small monkey. It must be admitted that this is so. This is true. But not all. Gorilka is also a medicinal drink. It relieves depression, melancholy and shyness, drives away worries and hardships to the far corner, helps to establish contacts between people and complete understanding between them. The main thing is that that vodka be cold, so that it is in abundance, and there is something to eat. Crispy lightly salted cucumber, a circle of onion and pink lard shmachok - this is what promotes absorption. All this was prepared with great understanding at Stalin's dacha. Moved stacks, drank at once. Besieged with cucumbers. -

One more? - I'd love to, Comrade Stalin, but you don't drink. How can I not

drink? I drank with you. Snake-Eater nodded his head to Stalin. Stalin did not understand. I took a closer look.

And realized. Zmееedov's glass from the ice vodka fogged up just a little. But Stalin's - no.

Trickster Comrade Stalin. And dexterous hands. To the serpent - vodka, to himself - water. How he managed to do this, the Serpent-Eater did not notice, but, having drunk and reaching for a cucumber, he noticed an almost inconspicuous difference. Life has taught the Serpent-Eater to pay attention to the most trifling trifles. It would be possible, revealing Stalin's cunning, to remain silent.

But anger plays: you are not dealing with a fool, Comrade Stalin! Stalin smiled, apologized: state affairs, not the time to drink, but if, Comrade Snake-Eater, you caught me on tricks, then pour me yourself, a penalty box. Poured Serpentine. Stalin drank. And

now, even his little glass was taken, as it were, by a mist. - And now together? Together, Comrade Stalin.

Stalin no longer takes
a bottle in his hands, since he
has already been caught. spilled

snake-eater. We drank. Now to
business. "So what is this word?" And what's the deal?

"You know, Comrade Stalin, what that means. - I know.
Do you know? "Now I know too.

Allow in order? - I allow it. - Five days ago, a Chekist
who arrived

from Kolyma disappeared at the Northern Station. He was dressed in civilian clothes. I was on duty on the first platform. Comrade Yagoda, People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, summoned me to his dacha. He demanded to find the missing person. We talked in the garden so no one would overhear. They sat at the table. During the conversation, he touched his face eleven times with his hand, lightly stroked his ear. The rest of the time he kept his hands under the table. Sometimes his gaze wandered away for a moment. "And what do you think it means?" - Like what? - the Snake-Eater was amazed. It means

he lied. "But I don't keep my hands
under the table. I propped my cheek with my left hand. Does
that mean something too?

- Certainly. If I had propped my chin on my hand, I would have read this as a loss of interest. But you, Comrade Stalin, pressed your palm to your cheek, fingers up, touching your temple. Is it not clear from this that you, Comrade Stalin, are extremely interested in my words?

- Right. You got me interested. What are you interested in actions of the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs?

— A man disappeared in Moscow. The man is so important that the head of the NKVD himself is personally involved in this matter. But he deals with this matter in private, without making a fuss, without involving the entire force of the NKVD in the matter, without rousing to his feet everyone who can and

should be roused. "And what do you

think it means?" - This means that the missing person is connected with some secret, but this secret is not a state one. If not state, then what? Anti-state, I guess.

Maybe it's just a personal secret. - No,

he can not. The central Chekist has disappeared, the chief Chekist of the country is looking for him. What is the personal

secret? - How did you know that the missing person

was a Chekist? - You can recognize the priest even in a matting, and the Chekist - even in a cassock. He clearly had a pistol on his left side under his jacket. That is why I paid special attention to it. Thieves with pistols do not go. Thieves - with feathers, sorry - with knives. The military walk around with pistols, but they are in uniform. Who do we have in a hat and with a gun? Collector? Collectors, diplomatic couriers, couriers, and in general everyone who is carrying something valuable, do not go alone. And what was the collector doing on the train that came from Vladivostok? - Why do

you think that the missing Chekist arrived from Kolyma? - Face

weathered, like a polar explorer. But the train is not from Murmansk, not from Arkhangelsk, not from the north, but from the east, from the Far East. I cautiously put Comrade Yagoda in such a way, by the way, that the idea was that, they say, a man rode for eleven days on a train, and before that, maybe three or four days on a steamer he was pumped. If this is not so, then Comrade Yagoda should have objected. Should have said something like: no, he was only shaking for five days on the train. "Didn't Comrade

Yagoda object?" — No, Comrade

Stalin, Comrade Yagoda did not object. - What could a

Chekist from Kolyma bring to the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs? - Important message

or gold. There is nothing more to bring from Kolyma. "Important message or gold," Stalin repeated with an arrangement.

- But the message can be transmitted by radio, by telephone, by telegraph. Almost all means of communication are in the hands of the NKVD. And almost all encryption services too. In extreme cases, the courier could arrive by plane. The NKVD has its own aviation. Why carry an important message fifteen days by train and steamboat?

"So it's gold?" -

So, gold, Comrade Stalin. - It's theft.

In extra large size. But still it's all just theft. Where is the conspiracy?

- As where? Here it is, a conspiracy. The People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of the Workers' and Peasants' State is provided with any benefits as needed. Whatever he wants, he will be given. He doesn't need money. He has neither the opportunity nor the right to leave the country. Why then does he need gold in kilograms, and maybe tens and hundreds of kilograms? For what

needs? — The right question, comrade Snake-eater. Come back home. Three people know about our meeting: you, me and my assistant who brought you here. Now repeat to him everything you told me. Thank you. Goodbye.

Goodbye, Comrade Stalin. Wait, what's your last name? - Our surname is Shirmanov.

Chapter 5

1

My name is Holovanov. For their own - the Dragon. Understood?

- And you don't take me for "understood"!

Understood? - Why do they call you

Snake-Eater? -

Yes, it's stuck. - And I remember the time when you could call the Serpent Eater only the one who killed the Chekist. At least

one. Killed? - It happened. Here the other day I had to. In addition to the previous ones. True, this is by verdict. - Who is this? Smirnov

Ivan Nikitich. - Well, it should

have. Did it happen without a verdict too? - It happened.

Only something you, comrade Holovanov, it hurts curious.

- Yes, I am. You are extremely interesting to me: before the Chekists killed, and now you yourself are a member of the NKVD GUGB. Bored?

- And you do not bitch me. It's better to be bored than to suffer. You look at your godfather Gutalin! He played the Tiflis treasury with partners, kept the oil fields in Baku under a warm wing, took a plentiful quitrent, and now he got mad, Gutalin became the General Secretary of the Communist Party. Why are you pushing empty on me, why don't you call your godfather Gutalin a bitch? - All right, Snake-Eater, don't fuss. You and I will unravel the tangle.

2

The one who called himself Ivan on the square of three stations Ivanovich, curled up in a horseshoe. The face is white with blue.

The one who called herself Iolanthe nodded to Arkashka-Khlust: ready.

Arkashka, baring his black teeth predatorily, put his paw into his jacket pocket over the client's heart and pulled a tight crocodile-skin wallet that had never been seen before in Moscow raspberries.

The catch is

unprecedented. With one glance he took in the bundle of rustlers, appraised it, and with a quick thought scattered the expenses. It is necessary to share with your own people - to bow to the cashier of uric mutual assistance. It is necessary to grease the garbage so that they do not cling. Kirny beaver should be taken out and thrown away. Satan will take care of this. He also needs to pay special attention to transportation. Lyuska-Syroezhka - for shock work. Painfully fat beaver hooked this time. There are a lot of expenses, but it doesn't matter how much Khlyust remains. Why, neither Shaitan nor Lyuska know how much is in a pack. You can tuck, tuck, twist. And the beaver with a kirk in the center suit is packed and the scales on it are foreign. His tikalki are red, in the sense of gold, but on a gold chain. In the portfolio - one disappointment, some papers. And we go through the pockets. There is a lot of good here - a cigarette case is either silver in gilding, or really gold. With a picture - hunters at rest. Also a yellow lighter with a red semi-precious stone. And what's in the vest?

There is

something hard in the vest. Come on, into the world. He looked, and the clear day faded in Khlyustov's eyes. There were two little red crusts there. And on each gold is a shield and a sword. The name in both crusts is the same, and the mug is the same. There are only differences: in the first

certificate - Dalstroy of the NKVD of the USSR, in the second - of the GUGB of the NKVD of the USSR. Dalstroy is Kolyma. Dalstroy is hundreds of thousands of prisoners. Dalstroy is a separate, most extensive, richest, most terrible and almost independent kingdom in the Gulag empire. Dalstroy is gold. Lots of gold. The largest deposits in the world. The most impactful booty is free labor force. Bober is a noble bigwig from the leadership of Dalstroy. Evidence of this is a very serious document. He is this document in Kolyma who should be in the nose of vanities. But in his pocket he has another document, much more serious - GUGB! Here he is there, in Kolyma, he certainly does not show anyone. This goose is a secret controller of the Main Directorate of State Security, introduced into the leadership

It was then that Arkashka-Khlust asked Lyuska in his hearts, whom she, the bitch, had brought. She answered him that she provided an exemplary client.

And he wished her that I can't put it on paper. And he added: - So that you hang around on a knife!

3

— How are you,
Snake? - Business in the Kremlin, we
have business. - Snake-eater, why did you write a letter to Stalin? What
is your interest? "You and I, comrade Holovanov, cannot work together.
Painfully you are curious, like an inquisitive woman.

— But still. -

Stalin did not find out my interest. He understood without explanation. So
ask Stalin. — I
already know. -

Well, eat healthy. I'll bake you a pie with nails. "When Yagoda deals with
this matter, he will liquidate you as an unnecessary witness. You, the snake-
eater, understood this and the skin came to us
save.

"Ah, you have been thinking for a long time, dear man. You show me the
one who in our beloved country does not save the skin. Are you not like that?
With your Gutalin-Stalin? - Okay,

don't freak out. Tell us better about that kitty, who led the hardened Chekist
from the pantalik, from the true path. Did you find her case? - Found. By

profession, a thief. From the homeless. name is
Lyuska-Russula. She is Lolanta, Evelina and Angelica.

- A prostitute? - No.

They are strict with this: we steal, but we do not trade ourselves. If in this case
they spot their own, they will be kicked out of the thieves. It sometimes only serves
as a bait when they take it for a tack. "And you

identified her from the photo and gave the case to Yagoda... They'll catch her
now, and through her they'll come out as accomplices."

— No, comrade Holovanov. I recognized her, studied the case, everything I remembered it, and slipped another one to

Comrade Yagoda. —

Another thief? - I'm not a murderer! If the thief or larva falls into the clutches of Yagoda in this case, she will disappear, whether she is guilty or not. I did not take the sin into my soul. And he had to show someone. Otherwise, they might not have let me out of his dacha. Showed him an exemplary girl from a good family. Dad is a commander in the General Staff. His last name is Streltsky. He showed Yagoda one that obviously had nothing to do with this case. And I have an excuse: I was deceived. I specifically chose one with which nothing bad can happen. Yagoda will figure out who she is and let her go. "Oh, and you are mistaken,

Snake-Eater.

4

I told you that the work of an assistant performer is not dusty. Do not doubt. He said the truth. Dusty but bloody. Performer - what? He himself is wearing an apron, a helmet, glasses, gloves with bells to the elbows. The blood sometimes gushes out. What about him? He has overalls. Shot in one back of the head, shot in the other, in the third. That's the end of the work. And who will carry the corpses? That's it. This is handy work. The car body is covered with galvanized sheets, the edges are bent. It's not to leak. The basement must be cleaned after work, prepared for the next working day. Cleaners are not allowed here. So who is to clean up? Again, handy. And deliver the corpses where ordered. Well, if in a crematorium: passed, received a receipt and is free. And if on Vagankovo, then it is necessary to bury it there. This is how much fuss. And then wash the body of the car, and with fresh sawdust

cover.

But the Serpent Eater is not exhausted by this work. More and more they put it directly on the execution: they say, gain experience, master the profession, get ready for promotion. And they are already predicting a brilliant career for him - it won't be long for him to be an assistant. Here, from Comrade Yagoda, an order came: not to overload the new comrade, giving him time for independent work.

And what kind of independent work, no one is supposed to know, even to the head of the special group, Comrade Extreme.

And if so, then no one else calls the Snake Eater by name. Instead, respectfully: Comrade Shirmanov.

5

"Listen, Shaitan, this beaver cannot be thrown away. This abyss must. With ends.

- This, Khlyust, is your concern. / won't take on a wet job. - I'm crying. -

Pay for transport, and muck it yourself. -

Where can he go? -

Previously, Zhigans in the Donskoy crematorium burned such people at night. But someone called. Freebie has been

covered. — And

how now? - I have the opportunity, but it costs a lot. -

Speak. "I

know places that will never be dug up. Chekists are shooting a lot of people in Moscow. Often - in the very center, on Lubyanka, on Nikolskaya. Corpses are burned or buried. I know a place on Vagankovo. There are no coffins. Bulk. And the people who work hard at the cemetery are the right ones. If you pay. They seem to be under the control of the Chekists, but they also watch their own interest. So, they will dig up a ditch, and carefully put your naked client in one pile with those who were shot. There are many, many of them. No one will ever dare to dig there.

- It's

coming. "There is a big risk here. Chekists can suddenly appear in the middle of the night. They take out their blind people with three-ton trucks of the plant named after

Comrade Stalin. I pay for the

risk. I will work. - There is a better option. But also more

expensive. - Don't pull. "I have a mahogany coffin in reserve just in case. Double bottom. Tomorrow the commander will be buried. We are yours

put the deceased below. Like a lining. And we will bury in the afternoon. With wreaths of scarlet roses. Under the "Internationale" and rifle volleys.

6

Lyuska-lolanta hid the way a wounded fox hides. I hid so that no one would find it. She knew how. In that case, she had long ago prepared a shelter. Around Moscow there are dacha settlements for tens and hundreds of kilometers in all directions. At any Moscow railway station, take a suburban train, ride at random, get out of the car after an hour of movement, after two, after three - you will still end up in a summer cottage. In recent years, wires have been pulled from Moscow. Electric trains instead of steam locomotives dart around Moscow. The speed is horrendous. In a couple of hours, you can go somewhere. But you still can't escape from the dacha world. He is here - everywhere! The farther from Moscow, the more often one comes across long-abandoned dachas, with broken windows, ripped shutters, collapsed roofs, with neglected areas overgrown with nettles. It's not like there's a place for a poor thief-thief, here you can hide at least partisan detachments, even gangs of abreks. And lucky - the end of the season, the children go to school, summer cottages are emptying, summer residents rush to Moscow, no one pays attention to anyone else. But finding shelter is half the battle. The nights are cold. Yes, and hunger is not an aunt. It is necessary to prepare the found shelter in

advance for a long-term occurrence, to provide yourself with warmth and food. Lucy took care of that too. But that's not all. Shelter should be sought for one from which there is a secret emergency exit. It's also nice to have a circular view to be aware of

what is happening around. There must be a source of water in the shelter. The toilet issue needs to be addressed. It would be nice to have a stove with a supply of firewood for the winter. How do you hide smoke from a chimney? Heat up at night. What if it's a moonlit night? You also need to take care that the rats do not plunder the food supply. And think about your own protection against rat attacks. They'll eat it. Cheesecake anyway.

She had thought about all this before. I found it all, stocked up,
prepared.

And so, having climbed into her fortress, filling up the entrance with beams, empty boxes and barrels, wrapping herself in a sheepskin coat, once on occasion, bitten by a gaping watchman, chewing soaked cracker in water, Iolante-Evelina-Russula thought about the future. About your own. About the nearest. The missing Chekist is now being searched for garbage, they are looking stubbornly and persistently. And they won't rest until they find it. And this is a terrible danger for Lucy. Lethal, or almost fatal.

The Chekist was killed by Khlyust, and Shaitan was buried in a coffin with a double bottom. If the Chekists find them, they will not pardon. And a simple execution will not do. But finding Khlyust and Shaitan is not at all easy. This is only if Lyuska is caught, and their names are torn out by torture, only then the highest measure shines for them after long and painful punishments. In the meantime, Lyuska has not been caught, they

can sleep peacefully ... Stop! But Khlyust and Shaitan, probably, tremble for their skins. And they understand that if they catch Lyuska ...

7

"We, comrade Kholovanov, have missed one trifle. —

What? - A

person from Kolyma could not go with one briefcase. - Could not. - He

should only have warm clothes for a whole suitcase. - Right. "Where's that suitcase?"

Why not a storage

room? No, Dragon. I remember exactly:

he got out of the car with a briefcase. I drew attention to this as well. It's strange. Long-distance trains. The farthest on our entire planet, and he is without a suitcase. Even if he got on the train not in Khabarovsk, but in Irkutsk or Novosibirsk, there must be a suitcase. Way out what.

"So he left it in the car." - And

it doesn't work. Long distance trains in Moscow

unload and immediately drive to a dead end, they carry out a technical inspection,

sanitization, washing, cleaning, painting, preparing for a new flight.
Nobody leaves luggage on the train.

- And if you find the guides and talk to them? - This
is what I'm leaning towards.

Chapter 6

1

Splash, Whip. Yes, tell me how you feel. - I feel myself,
Shaitan, very fine. They buried the central Chekist, and quietly, as in a
cemetery. Are we drinking? Let's drink! And we will be healthy. - And I mean:
we are

healthy, but everything is quiet. - So we will
rejoice, and put it out of our heads. - Will not work. -
And why is
that? Because it's
quiet. - Is it bad? -
Think,

Khlyust: the Chekist center disappeared. All attics, all cellars, all ruins,
all underground pipes, ravines and beams must now be searched for
garbage. Where are the raids? Where are the searches? Where are the
arrests? Where are the interrogations? Where are

the portraits of the missing
at the stations? - And really,
where? - And how do you explain

it? - No way. I don't understand anything. - And I, Khlyust, understand.
They are quietly searching. And I know who. Your Lyuska, Evelyn-Iolanta-
Angelica-Russula. This is their only thread. If they find her, they will find you. If they find you

- Satan! Never. - You'll

break up, to the very ass. Do I know you. Yes, and they can
prick. Not like you pricked. -

Satan! I'll go. Tomorrow. To the

Caucasus. - You will split - they will come to me. And behind me - serious

People. - Satan! I'm going to Estonia.

- So, serious people would not like to see you
came out.

- They won't come
out! - You understood me?

- I'm leaving today. -
You did not understand
me. "I really didn't understand. Give me
a beat. - Naboi? Are you asking for a hint? I don't give you hints. One thread is
reaching out to you. From your Lucy. If you want to live, cut ... a thread.

2

"That's what I think about the suitcase, Comrade Kholovanov. was not with
suitcases.

- Why? "I
won't say that either. He couldn't go alone. Must have a partner. What a way out:
four, or even five days by the ship "Heinrich Yagoda" from Magadan to Nakhodka. A
day, if you're lucky, from Nakhodka to Vladivostok. And eleven more to Moscow. More
than two weeks with transfers at ports and train stations, along aprons, berths, cabins
and corridors. But you also need to sit in a restaurant ... Oh, what restaurants are on
the Vladivostok-Moscow train! Or just stand at the station at the carriage steps, take a
sip of fresh air, stretch your legs. Yes, just run to the toilet ... And who will look after
the little things? Especially if there are nuggets with ingots in the little things? - Right.
With valuable cargo, no one, neither diplomatic couriers, nor

couriers, they don't travel alone.

"I suppose so. Coupe for four. There were three of them. We bought four tickets
so that no stranger was with them. They don't have enough money. Unloading heavy
cargo on the first platform of the Northern Station in Moscow is the stupidest thing to
do. They don't upload here. The last stop of the Vladivostok-Moscow train before
Moscow is in Yaroslavl. There are two with a heavy load out. No one pays attention to
them: Siberian geologists with tools. And one lightly continues the way. Here, in
Moscow, they meet him, rush to Yaroslavl by car and receive messengers with goods.
And no telephone telegraphs for you, no letters and ciphers. There are no more than
one trains from Vladivostok per day. Yagoda only remembers the date when one
person should be met in Moscow. "And how do you, Snake-Eater, know all this?"

- Sel, introduced himself as the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, who steals gold in large quantities from the workers' and peasants' state, and developed several options for courier communication. This one is the simplest. The most correct. The most reliable. I still won't say that. This arrival, apparently, in addition to everything else, also delivered the date of the next import.

3

The door suddenly opened. It looks like she was hit with something heavy. On the threshold - Lyuska-Russula. The one who is also called Angelica, then Evelina, and then Iolanta. In the hand - a small elegant pistol.

- You didn't expect me? -
N-n-no ... -

And what are you
cooing about? - It's
all about the weather. - I heard about some
thread. -

Lucy! — Do not flutter! I will
kill! - Lucy! We'll hide you... - At
the Vagankovsky cemetery? - Lucy!

Wait. Calmly. You will leave. Here's the money. See how much. Here is the cigarette case. Think gold? No. Gold is pure. And here is the lighter. Love how beautiful. With ruby. Lucy! Be careful with weapons ... - I'm always careful. Like a fox. -

Where did you get the gun? "You, Khlyust,
have always deceived me.

And you, Satan, too. When she realized this, she began to deceive you herself. As soon as the beaver got off its hooves, I opened the shoveler from him, took some for myself, returned the shoveler to its place, and only then called you. And then I open my jacket, on my left side - a neat little pistol. I just dreamed about this. Grab it - and into the hay. And I didn't have time to hide the holster. Here you, Khlyust, showed up. Eyes burning with greed. You're all in

the spade looked. In the meantime, I seemed to be helping you, unfastening the belt on his belly. At the same time, she pulled off the holster and hid it.

- Lucy! And thieves are not supposed to have a tapestry. Who took the tapestry in his hand, he got bored. Drop it. I won't tell anyone that you held it in your hands.

"Don't scare me, Whip. I know the law no worse than yours. Tapestry cannot be taken from the hands of power. And you can steal. And I decided to move away from the

thieves. - Tie

up? - No. Break away. One on the ice. -

Come on, Lucy, let's make a deal.

- Let's. -

Here's your money. Here's a little gold. And we'll leave.

- Fine. I'll take the money. And gold. - That's

agreed. "But you will stay

here. Shaitan rushed to her

and settled under the roar of a shot. The whip closed with his hands: do not kill! - I, Arkasha, do not kill. I cut the threads.

4

- Dragon, this Luska-lolanta can go far: to Siberia, Altai, the Crimea, the Caucasus, and even beyond the cordon - to Latvia, Lithuania, Poland. At the borders, violators are shot, dogs are poisoned, but she, you see, a beaten lynx, will leave. If it breaks through the cordon, we will never find it. The only hope for her cunning. Urks hide the most important things in plain sight. But what if she hides where she should not be now, where they will not look for her, where she lived before? I know these places - Kitay-gorod and Khoroshevka. If contacts

point, maybe someone will tell you.

5

Conductors of the courier train "Moscow - Vladivostok" are the guards of the entire conductor class. This is not "Leningrad - Moscow" for you - a night there, a night back. This is not "Voronezh - Kyiv", not "Khabarovsk - Khasan" and not even "Tashkent - Novosibirsk" with their ridiculous distances. "Moscow - Vladivostok" - eleven days there, eleven days back. There are two conductors in the car. Every day - 12 hours per brother. Divide those hours for two as they decide. In Vladivostok - one day off. In Moscow, upon his return - three days off at once and a day off for all overtime hours. After that - a new flight. Above all the conductors is the head of the train. In addition to the conductors, the director of the dining car with cooks, a barmaid and waitresses are subordinate to him. The head of the train is the pinnacle of the conductor's career. Work is better than nothing. Outside the window, the wind knocks down the trees, the pouring rain lashes, such that water cascades through the windows, or a snowstorm-blizzard rings and rages, and you have a small, warm, comfortable home. Carries you and shakes, carries and shakes, tapping at turnouts. Beauty all around. The Circum-Baikal alone is worth something. This piece of the highway used to be called the golden buckle of the steel belt of Russia. This is the most difficult section of the railway to build on our entire planet called Earth. And the most beautiful. On the right is a sheer cliff, sometimes two hundred meters high, on the left is a lake of incredible beauty, depth and transparency. The train slides along the ledge. Tunnel after tunnel. On the rocky rocks - century-old cedars and golden pines. Through the gorges, rivers of epic charm, crystal clearness rush to Baikal one after another, one after another. They murmur over

the stones. And bridges, bridges, bridges. The compartment of the head of the train is half filled with equipment. As soon as they passed near the Angara, only the blue of the sacred, deepest and purest lake in the world flashed ahead, as the head announces to the whole train that we are approaching, and starts a record about the wild steppes of Transbaikalia, about a tramp who escaped from hard labor, and then - about the wind

After Baikal, at the 7031st kilometer of the highway at the Amazar station, the train slows down, the locomotive hums with all its locomotive forces, the head of the train solemnly proclaims: "Citizens passengers, our train is approaching the bust of Comrade Stalin, cut down in

rock. The best view of the bust is from the windows on the left side of the train. Now go to the right side."

Slowly, slowly, the train floats past the bust, roars with all its might, greeting the most beloved person. The

bust of the prisoner was cut down by the enemy. There are no camps here. Persuaded the head of the camp: let me try. Allowed. In impregnable mountains, right above the highway, a hundred-meter-high lump ascended like a candle. Here he turned its top into a gigantic bust. Three years of rock gnawed. Last year, 1935, he completed his work and received forgiveness of sins. The enemy son helped him. The son did not receive forgiveness, because he fell off that rock just before the completion of the work. Yes. There are many of them, enemies. Along the highway of the camp, now on the right, then on the left, then on the right, then on the left. Like beads on a string. Then Amur. Creepy bridge near Khabarovsk. Barrage balloons above him. And, presumably, anti-aircraft guns along the banks under camouflage nets. Far below, under the bridge piers, terrifying gray whirlpools. And the head of the train at full

power "Amur Waves" cuts in. On October 5, 1916, the first train thundered and rumbled along the Amur bridge, and this was the end of the construction of the highway. 9259 kilometers and 216 meters. 25 years and 7 months made their way through Siberia. Completed, then the empire collapsed ... And was reborn under the leadership of Comrade Stalin. Almost within the borders. From St. Petersburg to the Great Ocean. It is a pity that Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia and Bessarabia came off. But this

is temporary. It will reach them. Comrade Stalin will return! Give it time! "Moscow - Vladivostok" almost rolls up to the very ocean waves. And, having rested, he returns, rumbling through the Yablonov Ridge, swimming smoothly under the bust of the greatest of people, overcoming thousands of ups and downs, hundreds of bridges and tunnels, blocking unprecedented spaces. And so: "Citizens passengers, our train arrives in the capital of our great Motherland and the entire world proletariat - the city of Moscow!"

And at full power - "International" from all the speakers. And what kind of people are on the Moscow-Vladivostok courier train! And Pacific sailors, and border guards, geologists, scientists, circus performers, prospectors, pilot

- free gold diggers with full pockets. And if so, then the sharpers-rollers hunt here. And girls are different. They have to be driven. Because it's not supposed to. There are merchants for everything your heart desires. So they dart around the wagons. Oh, and thieves. And beggars with harmonicas. Those also have to be driven out of the train. And one day a boy was born in the carriage. The head of the train, as an official, issued a document to him: he was born between the stations Zaigraevo and Khokhotuy.

Sometimes, at the very tail of the train, they hitch a red saloon car with a leader of the highest rank. The head of the train is obliged to introduce himself to him: Comrade Marshal of the Soviet Union, head of the train Kornilov. The train is ready to move, may I send it? But more often prison trailers cling.

The head of the train does not answer for them. There is someone to answer. In total, there are 24 Moscow-

Vladivostok trains. At the same time, a dozen in one direction are rushing - the first is already rolling into Vladivostok, and the tenth has just departed from Moscow. Towards them - another dozen. The rest are in maintenance, in repair, in preparation for a new throw to the ocean.

The head of one of these trains is Kornilov Alexey Alexeyevich. The Dragon poured it for him again, splashed himself, and clinked glasses.

It's time for Alexei Alekseevich to take a new voyage to the ocean. But the unexpected happened. One conductor of the sixth car was hit by an electric train. In Pushkino, on the platform, he stood too close to the edge, gaping. The second conductor of the same car drowned in the river. August. It's hot in Moscow. And the water is cold. Very close to disaster. Your body will cramp, and you're ready. At the bridge that leads to Serebryany Bor, they caught him still warm. And the train itself was driven into repairs, although it seems to be not

the time yet. - You, Alexei Alekseevich, I knowingly appointed a meeting with such a conspiracy. I would like to talk to the conductors of the sixth car. But someone got ahead. If anyone finds out about our meeting, then you have a direct path under the tram. But if no one finds out, all the same, your life is swinging on the cobweb.

- I, dear, did not break the law, did not commit villainy and crimes, did not do harm to anyone. I'm not afraid of anything. You don't have to be afraid.

They didn't see those.

- With you, Alexei Alekseevich, I've been talking for an hour. I needed to figure out some things. I made it very clear that you really do not know anything about the issues that interest me. However, there are people who may think otherwise. They may consider you a dangerous witness. Let them count. You don't have a family, I understand. — Yes

perishing what family
under such work. "I can keep you out of
danger. I know a lot about you. Checked all
parameters. I offer a new interesting job on your profile. — What could be better
than Moscow-Vladivostok? Don't offer. I won't accept. - All right, Alexey Alekseevich.
Here is my
phone number. Call if you change your mind. Ask Holovanov.

6

One Lyuska in the world. One. Who knows that she calmed down Satan and
Khlyust with ends? No one knows. No witnesses. And who knows what she did on that
accursed day at the North Station? Now no one knows it either. Although there, on
every platform, fidgety must be wiped off. If so, if they were there, if they spotted her,
then they are looking for her. And if they are looking, you need to hide. How? She
knew that such a day would surely come when they would sing
over

fried birds with it. I just didn't think he'd get there so quickly.

At night she thought about this inevitable day, prepared herself for it. And long
ago I decided that a prudent little fox should be
behind the hunter.

7

Last year, in 1935, the best representatives of the peoples of the great country
adopted a master plan for the reconstruction of Moscow,

developed on the initiative and under the guidance of Comrade Stalin. The plan is for 25 years. In accordance with the plan, the city center will retain a radial-circular street system, and new districts will grow five rays from the old center. It will be a city-star! Between the rays of the star, forest parks will cut into urban areas in giant wedges. The Izmailovsky named after Comrade Stalin and the Sokolnichesky named after Comrade Bubnov parks will turn into generators of clean air. The center of the star will be the Palace of Soviets - the tallest building in the world with a hundred-meter statue of Lenin on top. One of the branches of the Moscow metro named after Comrade Kaganovich will run right under this building. The metro station will be called the Palace of Soviets. The delegates of the upcoming congresses will have a direct path from underground to the majestic halls in which they are destined to accept all the new republics into the Soviet Union. Together with the capital, the whole country will flourish. Its grandiose shipping channels will cross from end to end, and Moscow will become a port of five seas: White, Black, Azov, Baltic, Caspian. A grandiose river station is already under construction in Khimki! Old lines will be expanded and new lines will be built. Nothing will remain of Okhotny Ryad, not even the name. The squares near the Saratov and Belarussian-Baltic

stations.

All this will be done, but for now, clearing is underway for the buildings of the Palace of Soviets, the Lenin All-Union State Library, the Council of People's Commissars, the Frunze Military Academy, the Moscow Hotel, and the Central Theater of the Red Army. Dust over the city. Cracking and crumbling old Moscow. From Kitay-Gorod and Zamoskvorechye to Sokolniki and Luzhniki, thousands of tons of broken bricks and rubble are carried by caravans of tireless ants.

Someday, in 25 years, back in 1960, everything will be fine and even fine, all problems will be solved. In the meantime, in the incredible interweaving of old streets and lanes, in abandoned but not yet destroyed buildings, in basements and cellars, underground passages and galleries, expanse for rats and stray dogs. And the thieves brethren. Birds flutter through the broken windows of houses and shops pressed against each other, cats dart through broken gates and ripped off doors of empty warehouses, factories, churches, workshops. All these

now no man's territories are weakly controlled by the Moscow police, and for the most part they are not controlled at all.

The snake-eater turned into a thug. On the right ear is a six-piece cap with a button on top. From under the cap - curly forelock. On the feet are chrome boots in an accordion. Gray jacket. Cigarette on the lip.

- And who did uncle lose here? - the grubby kid from the homeless is interested. - Curious we can pull out the claws, we can let the blood go. I ask you to leave our haza. - I'm looking for my

Shmara. "And uncle isn't a trash can by any chance?"

The Snake-Eater pulled the vest on his chest - admire the pictures. But he didn't convince

the boy: - There are many of you like that. Before - an honest urka in blue pictures, now - an urka in blue buttonholes.

- Don't joke, bud. Fall I'll tear. So who are we looking for?

— Luska-lolanthe. -

Russula? - Her.

- And for what? -

My old Korefanka. I don't remember when I saw her. Give me some money, maybe I'll remember.

He put the Snake-Eater in, and the little

boy perked up: "Follow me!" Come in - don't be afraid, come out

- don't cry. Turned there, here. Broken glass crunches underfoot. They went down to the basement. Not a stoker, not a bakery, not a laundry. Everything here is destroyed, destroyed, destroyed.

The Snake-Eater looked in one door after another, making sure that no one was around. He just turned away, and behind him the bolt of a pistol clanged.

And a shot rang out.

A bullet next to the right ear crashed into a brick wall, whipping dust with small brick fragments in the face. The Snake-Eater jerked his head to the left, but right there and to the left the second bullet crashed into the wall. The snake-eater - with its nose into the wall, but you can't turn around, you've been warned: a sharp movement will be the last.

“So you, trash can, are explaining that Lyuska-lolanthe is your corefan, and I only saw you so beautiful once at the North Station, and even then on the horizon. It was only then

that it came to the Serpent Eater that he was caught. He was looking for her, and she followed his trail. She caught him exactly where he hoped to find her. How did he not realize that the best disguise for her was to close up with a kid? How did you not recognize her? A shorn head, a grubby mug, dressed barefoot, but the muzzle is still the same.

- Now, trash, I'm going to kill you. Hold on. — *I'm* not in the trash anymore. - You will report it in the other world. -

Wait. Do not rush. Let me turn around to face you. - For what? - Shooting

in the back of the head is meanness. You are not a performer. sentences from Lefortovo.

“Did you kill people in the back of the head?” -

Killed. - And you

can? - I have a lost soul. And you take care of yours. - I also have a missing

one. - No! Not yet. When you kill a lot, you want to kill more and more. How many have you killed in your life? You will be

third. “So don't rush, otherwise that insatiable desire will awaken, you won't be able to live without new murders.” -

And you? - I have awakened. And it suffocates me. I can't live without it. When the case tends to murder, I shake all over, turn white, anticipating ...

“I didn't wake up after two. One more - not great difference.

- Fine. Kill. Just let me turn around. Let death look into your eyes. - Fine. Turn around, just slowly.

I will shoot you in the forehead. Soon an American steam shovel will be brought here, you, garbage, will be scooped up, taken out and thrown on a garbage heap.

Snake-Eater turns slowly, realizes that she has a gun in her right hand, so you can't determine anything by her right hand. But according to

the position of the left hand can be set to something. He would not like to see a clenched fist, when the thumb locks the rest as if with a lock. But that's exactly what he saw. The arm is not bent at the elbow, the hand is tightly compressed. This is a sure sign of determination. This will slam a piece of hot lead into the forehead, will not flinch. The snake-eater is from the same breed of resolute ones, therefore he has no doubts.

Dodging death won't burn out. I would have

had enough strength not to wet myself with a hot stream. By his profession he knows that a person is weak. As soon as he realizes that he got into the execution chamber, that there is no more hope, then all the restraining centers turn off by themselves, he no longer has power over them. The snake-eater understands that there is no way out for him, but the centers have not yet turned off. He has another problem. On the eve of imminent death, a wild, frantic sexual impulse awakens in a person. This is a normal reaction of life to the approach of death. The organism needs to continue itself, to leave behind something alive in this living world. At the same time, nature demands to be satisfied right now with all the pleasures released for the whole future life. For a long life, each has its own measure of pleasure. The serpent-eater was measured out beyond measure. But there will be no more life. It will not be possible to spread passions over

decades. Because they suddenly boiled all at once. He pressed his back against the wall, closed his eyes with force, gritted his teeth, feeling no pain, and let out such a groan that she was frightened: what is the matter with you, garbage? It doesn't seem to be cowardice.

He opened his eyes slowly, slowly. She stands in front of him. I would tear it apart, crush it all like bird cherry blossoms, kiss it, suffocate it with kisses. For such a moment, I would not spare my life. Let me kill you later. You are beautiful, Lyudmila Pavlovna. Even in this outfit.

Oh no
in vain they put you as a lure ... - You,
trash can, do not sing sweet songs. She says,
and her fist is slightly unclenched, the thumb has moved away from the rest, it
seems like a lone wolf has broken away from the pack. - Where,
garbage, do you know the patronymic? - I
found your case and delved into
it. - And to whom did you show this case?

- No one. Didn't kill you. Smeared off. Another instead of you framed.

"And what happened to

her?" - Don't know. I think they'll figure it out.

They will let you go. - Fool. They don't let go from there.

- It could be. - If you scammed me, then why were you looking for me? — I need that beaver's briefcase. - If I give the briefcase, what will happen to me?

I will

change your fate. - You're lying. Every person has a moment in his life when he can change his fate. But for this you need to put your life on the line: pan or disappeared, chest in crosses or head in the

bushes. - In the "Crosses" - is it in St. Petersburg? Taganka and Butyrka

are enough for me. - I'm not talking about that. Take a chance. Put your life on the line and... you lose. Trust me... And I will kill you. Or, perhaps, if you believe, you

will win... - Did you put your life

on the

line? - Yes.

- For a long time?

— A week

ago. - And How? - I was in the trash. And now I'm getting out of this business. Already A whole week I live and rejoice.

Her left hand lightly touched her chin. Everything is clear here. This gesture in women clearly indicates reflection. In men, this condition is given out a little differently: the hand gently strokes the chin.

- Okay, trash. Your beaver was buried at Novodevichy in a coffin with a double bottom, along with some army commander. And his briefcase is under that pile of rotten boards. Take it. The Wyrmeater

turned to the rotten heap. Bent down. That's when the shot rang out. The white

light in his eyes faded not immediately, but slowly. As if reluctantly. Fading out.

Chapter 7

1

Kornilov Alexei Alekseevich, the head of the train "Moscow - Vladivostok", does not need a lot of property. Everything he has is placed in the commander's cabin. His house is on wheels. Everything you have is always with you. And when the train is driven into maintenance, he is provided with lodging for the night in the Railwayman's

House. The People's Commissar of Railways Comrade Kaganovich provided comfort to the train crews. The railwayman's house is a former merchant's mansion under centuries-old lime trees in a quiet corner of Moscow: close to the center, and parks around, and silence like in a country house. Warm evening. Almost night. At the end of August it gets dark early. In the alley - only one car at the sidewalk spent the night. There is nothing strange here. Worth it and let it be. Although closer to the night there is usually no one here.

Alexei Alekseevich walked past that car, and his heart skipped a beat. There is only one person at the wheel sitting in it. And everything would be fine. But he's too upright. Looks ahead with disdain. Doesn't turn his head. Doesn't blink. Painfully serious. So at the back of the class, repeaters demonstrate exemplary behavior when cards are cut during a lesson. Alexei

Alekseevich is walking towards the central entrance, thinking. You go in there and you don't go out. That's why he didn't come in. And so, slowly, walking, waddling, wandered past. Sometimes even the head of the train has joy in his soul. The person does not sleep. He freely walks around Moscow at night, like a well-fed cat, having slept warmly for the whole day. Turned around the corner, whistling a song. He remembers these lanes from a long time ago. And rushed around a new turn. He runs, he hears - they run after him, but there seemed to be no one around. Around the next corner, he turned around with his whole body and with a swing to the one who flew out after him, with his fist in the snout - grunt! He carried with all his might. So, having received in the jaw and clicking it, the run continued, but already along a broken trajectory with a decrease and a turn on the back.

Aleksei Alekseevich caught the second one, out of breath, jumping out from around the corner, in his arms like a child, smiled at him and, clasping the back of his head with his huge paw, blurted his mug on the brick corner.

In the days of his youth, there was no such institution where people in the arena beat each other's faces for the amusement of the public. In those glorious times in the arenas of circuses, wrestlers in a fair duel measured themselves against the force without a massacre. Alexei Alekseevich was a circus wrestler in those years. From there, after the October coup, he was taken to the Kremlin guards. Worked well, served honestly. Only after the murder of comrade Sverdlov did he decide to step aside from that security business, telling the sick. It's very easy there, in a spider jar, to get into the guilty for no reason at all. But after many years, fate found him here. Somewhere, some business is spinning, someone is to blame for something, and the fidgety ones have followed him. The head of the Moscow-Vladivostok

train did not lose his wrestling skills over the years. If any hooligans are sent out of the train, it is he himself, without waiting for the police. Didn't like to fight. I never learned this business. But if it was necessary to punch someone in the face, then somehow it turned out by itself. Aleksey Alekseevich shook one of the recumbents by the breasts, then the

second. They seem to be breathing, but they are not returning to this world yet, only slightly jerking their legs. He turned out his pockets: two revolvers of the Nagant system, two wallets with documents. I looked around the corner - far beyond the bend, five more people were running here. These two lying down are the first pair of sentinels. The rest of the brigade kept a little further.

Alexei Alekseevich did not wait for them. Through courtyards and gates, through fences and roofs of sheds, tearing linen from ropes, tearing firewood from woodpile, along fire escapes and drainpipes, familiar streets and unfamiliar alleys, he rushed to the completely different end of the great city.

He caught his breath, felt himself in his pockets, found a piece of paper with a number, dropped the coin he needed into the telephone hole and calmly, with the dignity befitting the head of the Moscow-Vladivostok courier train, asked Comrade Kholovanov. He answered immediately, as if he was sitting by the phone and waiting for a call:

- Holovanov.

"Comrade Holovanov, it's Seyich that worries you. We met today. "Yes, Comrade Kornilov.

The head of the train filled his voice with indifference: - You said something about some new job. And I didn't listen. — Yes, Sei Seich. I have an offer. I'll explain

tomorrow. We'll meet at the same time at the same place. Is it coming?
- It's coming! That's wonderful. We'll meet right tomorrow. Right in the same place. Very cool. - Well, see you tomorrow.
"See you tomorrow, Comrade Kholovanov!" Could you please ride your motorbike right now?

2

Every person has a great memory. But not everyone knows how to use it. Memory is like a smart machine that is given to each of us at birth, but not everyone knows which pedals to press, which buttons. And for some reason our schools don't teach how to memorize, how to develop memory, how to use it. But it should be the most important subject in school. Teach me to remember, and only then teach everything else. There will be some sense.

Genrikh Grigorievich Yagoda was endowed by nature with a powerful and tenacious memory. But he was not satisfied with the gifts of nature. He did not expect favors from nature. He stubbornly developed and trained his memory the way boxers, wrestlers and weightlifters train their bodies. Iron Heinrich developed for himself a system of exercises for the development of memory in four main areas: memorization speed, accuracy, the amount of information stored and the duration of its preservation. For each of these areas, he had his own techniques. In addition, there are several complex methods. The simplest of them: falling asleep in the evening, I tried to remember the whole day, but not from morning to evening, but, on the contrary, from evening to morning, in all the little things and details: so I went to bed and took cover, and before that I brushed my teeth, and before that ... And so until the very moment of awakening. It's good for sleeping too. Did not hav

to remember what book he leafed through in the evening, and already fell asleep in a deep,

calm sleep. It turns out a win-win scenario: either you sleep serenely, like a drunken gypsy on a white tablecloth, or you train your memory, not cursing insomnia, but welcoming it. If all day long backwards in all the details I remembered, but did not fall asleep, remember the whole of last year. And again, on the contrary, starting from December 31st.

Henry can't sleep. He turned from side to side, remembered the last year of 1935. Ah, what a glorious year. What a December! And before that - what a November!

In November, five top commanders of the Red Army were awarded the personal military ranks of Marshals of the Soviet Union. In addition, one Chekist, namely he, Unbending Heinrich, was awarded the title of General Commissar of State Security. Marshals - big stars in red buttonholes, Heinrich - in blue. And it all started earlier. In September, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet by its decree established military

ranks in the Red Army and special ranks of the NKVD, which did not exist before. Prior to that, all military and Chekist chiefs were simply comrade commanders.

The decree did not appear by itself. He was preceded by a meeting between Heinrich and comrades Voroshilov, Budyonny and Tukhachevsky on April 13 of that very 35th year, here, at the dacha of the People's Commissar of Internal

Affairs in Kommunarka. Heinrich invited the red commanders to discuss a matter of extreme importance: strengthening discipline in the troops. You have a lot of people in the Red Army, and I also have a lot of people in the NKVD: there is a whole army of border guards alone, and government communications, and the protection of camps and prisons, objects of national importance must be vigilantly guarded and steadfastly defended. And there are so many of them, objects - from bridges, tunnels and power plants to foreign embassies and the Kremlin itself. Both I and you, comrades, have common problems, so let's

solve them together. Iron Heinrich treated the army commanders, as they know how in the NKVD. We discussed issues, outlined measures, and by the very end, Heinrich so casually threw out to them that there was no discipline, because

subordination, but there is no subordination, because there are no military ranks. And

shut up. Wow, what a point! The revolution abolished military ranks, making everyone comrades. And without titles, what the hell is discipline? What the hell is obedience? What obedience? If a stenographer had been

sitting next to the four peasants, she would, no doubt, have recorded the revival in the hall. But at that historical moment there was no stenographer at the NKVD dacha. Therefore, take my word for it: there was a revival, and there were many questions. Voroshilov: So, are we returning to golden shoulder straps and general

ranks? Tukhachevsky: Will the people understand? Budyonny: and Comrade Stalin? And then

the three of us vying: so, are we

introducing non-commissioned

officers? This is a return to the accursed tsarism, which we have successfully crushed. And together with non-commissioned officers - ensigns, second lieutenants and lieutenants we will get? Staff captains, lieutenant colonels and colonels? Will we have generals? Like the damned Denikins and Yudenichs! And admirals??? How vile Kolchaks???!!! Wise Heinrich prepared all the answers in advance: we will not have non-commissioned officers!

There will be sergeants. There will be no ensigns and lieutenants! There will be lieutenants, juniors and seniors!

And to him, interrupting each other: how are the lieutenants? The lieutenant is fleet. And what are we going to have naval ranks in the infantry and cavalry?

Why not? Heinrich fights back. - If only the old counter-revolutionary titles did not resemble. Above

the lieutenants is the captain. There is nothing terrible in this title. Why not? There is also the captain of the ship. There is a captain of the football team. Next is Major. There was such a title in Russia once upon a time. Then it was cancelled. In the army of Tsar Nikolashka the Bloody there was no such rank, and the Whites did not. Here we will introduce it. We can do without the lieutenant colonel. Above Major is Colonel. What's bad about it? We have regiments, let there be colonels. But there will be no generals. The general and the admiral are the bloody dogs of the counter-revolution. There will be brigade commanders, division commanders, commanders, army commanders. We will come up with a beautiful form, but so far without stripes and gold shoulder straps. Not all at once. We'll try this later.

Sly Heinrich said this and fell silent again. Silence

fell on the veranda. Tukhachevsky's eyes are burning like heavenly stars, but he is silent. But Comrade Voroshilov could not stand it: who will I be? And then he corrected himself: who will we be? Heinrich was just waiting for that question.

He has a thundering answer, like an ambush regiment in the forest, hiding: you will be field marshals! During the three Russian revolutions, there was not a single general field marshal near Nikolashka. And the whites didn't, so why not...

And again silence covered the four thinkers with its wing. Stalin will not allow.

The people won't understand. In this word, the general is still present. And in the field marshal - a suspicious German sound. All right, all right, you'll be marshals. Marshals of the

Soviet Union! This is correct. All agree? No objections? But how is such an important proposal to be dragged over a rocky rift named Stalin?

But Wise Heinrich thought about this too: an initiative from the locality! There is a meeting of commanding officers somewhere in the Far East, the commander of the regiment (only a very good, exemplary regiment) gets up and makes a business proposal ... Then, at the same meeting in the Arctic, the commander of the forward division makes a judgment. Then someone in the General Staff... Independently of each other. Are you, comrades, capable of organizing an initiative from the localities? Able. But keep aloof from this matter yourself, if you have any doubts, show hesitation ... And I will organize an initiative from the localities through the NKVD ... We will carry out work carefully in the Central Committee ... "And what do you, Genrikh Grigorievich, want to get from us in return?" - I don't want to get anything. I strengthen

discipline in the troops. - Discipline is clear. You will support us in this right undertaking, we will help you in your actions. What titles did you give your kids? - The highest composition - the Commissioners of State Security

first, second and third ranks.

- It's coming. And what would be your title? Marshal of the NKVD or what?

- Yes, the General Commissioner of State Security would be enough for me. That's what they decided...

3

Lyuska Snake-eater hits on the cheeks: wake up, trash can. Woke up. He looked around, wondering where he was. - I was joking. Fired again. And again past you. Lyuska-Russula did not know how much the Serpent-Eater had had these days: a sudden appointment to the commandant's special group of the Lefortovo prison, a meeting with Yagoda, feverish sleepless work at his dacha, a letter to Stalin and a meeting with him. She didn't know where the Snake Eater worked, she couldn't imagine what they were paying big money for not only to Lefortovo performers, but even to their henchmen. And they are paid for their beloved, adored, but still

very, very hard and nervous work. The tension of these days gathered into a big heavy lump, and a sudden shot behind him at a moment when it should not have been, became the pop that tears thousand-ton avalanches off the rocks. A shot rang out - the snake-eater lost consciousness. The fainting was deep and long. Fainting is like a heavy sleep, but without dreams. He heard some noises

around, not feeling himself. He opened his eyes. For a long time he looked at the collapsed ceiling and at the face bent over him. Then with his right hand, clasping

his neck, he drew this face to himself. - Lyudmila Pavlovna, Lyudmilochka, Lyushka, rely?

"Yes," she replied quietly.

4

The IS steam locomotive delivered the prison car to the Kyiv railway station in Moscow and drove it into a dead end. A long limousine rolled up to the carriage steps. Arrested Streletskaya was squeezed onto

back seat between two matrons. Hands in handcuffs, a tarpaulin cloak was thrown over his head. And they took me somewhere. Very fast.

They took ten to fifteen minutes. But maybe not. If you do not see what is happening around, then perception, including time, is disturbed.

Then they stood. Apparently, in front of the checkpoint. Then we drove again. But not for long. Stopped. The door slammed. Two aunts led Nastya out by the arms. She still doesn't see anything. Carefully climbed the steps of the porch. The steps, Nastya determined, were obviously made of stone. Only eight. Move forward, turn around. Cautiously descended somewhere. Nastya counted 24 steps. Still forward, to the left. The door rattled. The cloak was torn from her head and pushed forward. The door banged, slammed shut, the bolts clanged, the locks clicked. I looked around. This is not how she imagined a

prison cell.

There is a large room, thirty square meters. The ceiling is stone, vaulted, as in the Kremlin chambers. One window. Obviously a prison type. Very high on the ceiling. The lattice is old, forged, twisted with a beautiful pattern. The thickness of the wall is breathtaking - a meter and a half, or even all two. The window is, as it were, a deep sloping tunnel, which someone cut under the very vault, breaking forward and upward towards the light. But there is no light in the window - a lattice, behind it is frosted glass, behind the glass one more lattice is guessed. The door is iron, forged, heavy, embedded into the wall. This inner wall also cannot be described without admiration. The opening for the door is like a small tunnel in indestructible granite blocks. What is interesting: there is no peephole in the door for spying on the prisoners. And why is that? The floor is parquet, sparkling. Soldier's iron bed against the wall. The table is quite small, built into the wall. The stool is bolted to the floor. In the corner to the right of the entrance behind the fence is a toilet. There are no irritating odors. All is clear. Outside the window is night. Under the high ceiling there is one light bulb, but there is no switch. He is clearly there, in the hallway. The light doesn't seem to turn off at night. But the light is not blinding. And silence.

Nastya sat down on the edge of the bed, figured out where this had brought her?

Holovanov's safe house is mobile, or rather floating. In Khimki, near the Northern River Station of the capital, which is under construction, among large steamships, floating cranes, excavators, tugboats and barges, a small, unprepossessing, grimy pleasure steamboat of the Glavspetsremstroy workers' union lurks. On the steamboat there is a captain, a mechanic and one sailor. In appearance, the steamboat is not so

hot, but inside it is cozy. It was here that Kholovanov brought the head of the Moscow-Vladivostok train: here, Seyich, your cabin, here is the shower, here are the clothes to choose

from. But first, tell

me everything. What to tell? The head of the Moscow-Vladivostok train laid out the contents of his pockets on the table: two revolvers, two wallets. Holovanov revealed the identity. The first is the GUGB of the NKVD of the USSR,

and the second is the GUGB of the NKVD of the USSR. — That's it, Sei Seich. Not the police were chasing you, not the criminal investigation

department, but the State Security. "So I'm a dead

man. - We'll see. Pour, and we will be on "you". We drank. Kholovanov reported the situation: the captain, mechanic and sailor were armed. They have a DP light machine gun, Degtyarev Infantry, three rifles, a supply of ammunition and grenades. Holovanov himself has a Lahti pistol. The control cabin from the inside to the level of the windows is lined with armor plates. One cabin behind the wheelhouse is a large armor box. Not only the walls are covered with armor, but also the floor and ceiling. From this cabin there are exits to the control room, to the engine room and to the hold. In the armor box there are loopholes for all-round firing. They are not visible from the outside. They are draped for ventilation. In the event of an armed

attack, this cabin is a place of assembly and defense. There is something to fight off. But armed attack is not the main threat. In order to attack, the place must first be found. It's not that easy. Conspiracy. But there are things more serious. The crew is not dedicated to our affairs.

The crew in the event of an attack will only help fight back or leave. For the two of us, t

Berry. He steals gold in Kolyma, we accidentally learned his secret. He won't leave us alive. I didn't

know his secrets. Yes, and I don't want to

know. - Who cares about that? The best car in the train is the sixth.

There are two conductors and the head of the train himself. In that car, the couriers carried their cargo. Here you have both comfort and safety. While everything was quiet and peaceful, you, Sey Seich, did not interfere with anyone. But one courier is missing, the whole scam may be revealed, because Yagoda removes everyone who could know at least something.

The

conductors

might know. They are no more. You are next in line. - Yes, things ... - I believe that three

men were traveling in the same compartment, having four tickets.

Right? - Right. I paid attention to them. Painfully expensive pleasure from Vladivostok to Moscow to buy an extra ticket. A simple Soviet person is

beyond his strength. Yes, and in the sixth car! - That's it. Two of them got off in Yaroslavl.

With very heavy suitcases. So? — So it was. Where

did you get all this, Dragon, you know? - One smart guy suggested.

And the third passenger arrived in Moscow. Light. With one briefcase.

- Exactly. -

We would like that briefcase!

6

The General Commissar of State Security is sad. He called the secretary of the NKVD Bulanov Pavel Petrovich:

- If the thieves have the portfolio, they can sell it. - It

is possible that in the end that briefcase may end up with Gutalin himself. - What

we are going to do? -

You, Genrikh Grigorievich, should go to Gutalin himself, forestall the blow. Like, they dig all sorts of different things under the leadership of the NKVD, compose fables, weave provocations.

- Right. I'll go. And what about the Serpent?

- The girl he indicated has already been brought.

7

- Tell me this, Dragon, explain: if the State Security is against me, if Yagoda himself is a mortal enemy to me, then why should I seek protection from you? Wouldn't it be better for me to go into the woods? Or to thieves, having grown a beard. Or move across the border. Who are you? How can you protect me? Are you not afraid of State Security? Have you decided to compete with Yagoda himself? And what kind of office do you have with a DP machine gun?

- From the very beginning to explain to you? - From the very

beginning. - The old system was overthrown, nobles, merchants, diplomats, ministers, officers, generals, admirals, policemen, engineers, journalists, owners of factories, mines, newspapers, steamships, railways - all those who ruled were exterminated or thrown out of the country. There was a terrible void. Scoundrels and scoundrels of all stripes rushed into this void, rushed to manage and command. We have one party. And she is in power. There are no other parties and never will be. It is clear that rogues, dodgers and swindlers of all colors and shades rushed into this party. Comrade Stalin is purging the party, driving swindlers, adventurers and swindlers out of it. But they climb. Already one and a half million have been expelled from the party. This is a petty bastard, suddenly elevated to the heights, but soon dropped from there. These are recent bosses, from foremen to people's commissars, who have lost their jobs. This is a Trotskyist-Leninist bastard. This is a whole class of dissatisfied. This is dynamite. And it can explode. But even this is not the main thing. In the party itself there are whole herds of rogues, swindlers and scoundrels. They have not yet been cleaned, but they know what awaits them. The last seventeenth party congress was in February 1934. It is called the Congress of Winners. The workers and peasants sent hundreds of gifts to the congress, including the first Soviet trolleybus. Tula gunsmiths presented Comrade Stalin with a sniper rifle with an optical sight. Comrade Stalin from the presidium examined the delegates through a sniper scope. The congress laughed out loud. But neither Stalin nor the delegates were in the mood for jokes. Comrade Stalin has too many enemies.

Against him is the entire so-called "Leninist guard" - almost all of the leadership of the party. Many in the leadership of the Red Army are against him. Against him - the leadership of the NKVD. Stalin has not yet been eaten only because these three forces are hostile to each other. And within these forces is a squabble of factions. And also because Yagoda is at the head of the NKVD. He bends his line, but it is beneficial to Stalin. A week ago, the trial of Zinoviev, Kamenev, Smirnov and others ended. These are the enemies of Stalin. They are destroyed. The process was prepared by Yagoda. He is preparing new trials against former members of the Politburo - Bukharin, Rykov, Pyatakov and others.

Stalin does not want to

interfere with him. What is your role in all this? - Above the state apparatus, Comrade Stalin is secretly building an apparatus of his personal power, with his own army, diplomacy, police, statistics, control systems, transport, communications. This steamboat is from the

composition of Stalin's personal fleet. - And you,

Dragon, who are you in this apparatus.

"Something

like the chief of intelligence." - Well, but ... - And I offer you the position of the head of a very important

train and the

only conductor in that train. - Route? - From Moscow to the very outskirts. From the southern mountains to the northern seas. The train is disguised as a repair train, in fact it is a courier train. The

locomotive is the most powerful in the

country. Is it coming? - It's coming. What about State Security? We will protect yo

Chapter 8

1

Hello Comrade Stalin! Hello,
comrade Yagoda. - Comrade
Stalin, an operation to destroy the enemies of the people
Zinoviev, Kamenev, Smirnov and their entire gang was successfully completed.

"Congratulations, Comrade Yagoda. I ask you to urgently provide
lists of particularly distinguished investigators and everyone who was
involved in unraveling this snake tangle. Do not forget the executors of
the sentence and their henchmen. These people put the last point in every
case. They need to be taken special care of. We will reward all participants
in this great cause with orders, high positions and titles, cash prizes,
apartments, vouchers to resorts and sanatoriums.

Tomorrow the lists will be presented. -

And what would you like to receive as a reward for a brilliantly carried
out operation, Comrade Yagoda?

"Comrade Stalin, I don't need anything. I fight the enemies of the
people. This is my happiness. This is my reward. Next in line are former
candidate member of the Politburo Sokolnikov and former member of the
Central Committee Radek. We will reach Bukharin, Rykov,

Krestinsky, Rakovsky. "Very well, Comrade
Yagoda, very well. - Comrade Stalin, what to
do with Pyatakov? -

What is the problem? - The problem is that a member of the Central
Committee, the first deputy people's commissar of heavy industry Pyatakov
overdid it. During the preparations for the trial of Zinoviev, Kamenev,
Smirnov and others, Pyatakov publicly demanded capital punishment for
them, announced that he was ready to personally shoot

them all. - Very well done! -

Yes, but ...

- What is the "but"?

- The defendants Zinoviev, Kamenev and Smirnov took offense at Pyatakov and announced that both Pyatakov and his wife were also members of their gang. A month ago we arrested Pyatakov's wife. She confessed to everything. — And what about Pyatakov himself? -

Pyatakov announced that
he was ready to personally shoot his own
wife along with the rest of the enemies.

Comrade Stalin measured twenty steps around the office.
He turned around and lit his pipe. He was silent for a long time. He returned to his seat.

Ready to shoot enemies. But his enemies recognized him as their own. Arrest him, comrade Yagoda, obtain a confession of guilt and bring him out as a defendant at the next trial. Where is he now? - Resting in Yalta, in the sanatorium of the

Council of People's Commissars. But the wife is in jail. How is he? "We assigned a girl to him for services. - Fine. Let him
rest. When will he return? - 23 September. - Arrest in
the carriage at the moment the train arrives in Moscow.
Block the corridor
with porters. Let everyone out of the car, and wipe it off. When the car is empty,
present the warrant.

- Understood. May I appear in person from the next compartment?
Comrade Stalin laughed with a soundless laugh: I allow it! Stalin loved
jokes. He appreciated the jokes of his subordinates. He himself was a great joker. A
little joke, but it charges for an hour! — Back to the question of your
reward. So what would you like? "Comrade Stalin, I repeat: I don't need anything.
"And

what if we consult with our comrades and make you a member
of the Politburo?" - Great honor, Comrade Stalin. I hardly deserve it. - You are
worthy. Get ready. First
for order - a candidate for

members of the Politburo, and after half a year - a full member! - May I
ask you a personal question, Comrade Stalin? - Can. —
Comrade

Stalin, I have many enemies. They are afraid of me, many are eager to spoil me.
Intrigues are spun against me, gossip is spread, provocations are arranged ...

"Comrade Yagoda, this is not a private matter. This is a matter of great national importance. You are doing a job that no one else can do. We won't let you get hurt. We don't believe gossip. Let's slander. We will shoot the slanderers. Go and work quietly. I wish you success.

2

The snake-eater got in touch: Comrade Holovanov, take it from China cities. Not just me, two of us.

It's simple. Not to ride a motorcycle yourself, but to call someone should send the car.

The Snake-Eater brought with him some kind of spaniel. Presented by: Ludmila Pavlovna, for her own - Lyuska.

There is also a free cabin for Luska. Only there are no women's clothes. Yes, she, sheared, and to nothing. Better yet - under the boy. Here is the vest. Too big, however, it will be a little. Here is the jacket. Roll up the sleeves. And pants too. Here is the young man. Now to the table. Treat captain.

Four at the table: Dragon, Sey Seich, Snake-Eater and Lyuska-Russula. The treat is simple: a dozen bottles of beer in a tub of ice, black loaf of bread, a bunch of dried roach, cucumbers and tomatoes in an iron bowl, half a meter long stick of sausage that is not chewed through. With such a stick, at least drive nails into the wall, at least disperse demonstrations. It's a gift that all of us now agree.

Tomorrow the soup will be with beans and fried potatoes. And today, excuse me - dry rations. Guests were not expected. The

guests looked at each other: it seems that it will do. And suddenly everyone remembered that they had not eaten anything today. They piled on. The sausage was gnawed down to the very rope. Well, we had some beer.

Now to business. - What

do you have, Snake? - Yes, Lyudmil Palna found some briefcase. Maybe it will be interesting. There is something about mining some metal in Kolyma. What exactly is not said. I don't know what kind of metal is mined there.

- Let's see. Where did you find it? Yes, it was in the trash. -

OK. Open up. The

snake-eater clicked the locks, dumped the contents on the table: papers, papers, papers. In papers - numbers, numbers, numbers. If the portfolio is from Kolyma, from Dalstroy, then the numbers can mean expenses, expenses, production. If you sit, think, think, you can figure it out. Let's figure it out. — What do you have,

Lyudmila Pavlovna? — So far, nothing.

- And then? - And then we'll see.

3

Khodynka field is not far from the Kremlin. On Khodynka - Moscow Central Airfield. As the name implies, the Central Airfield is almost in the center of the capital of our great Motherland and the entire world proletariat. Around - aircraft factories and design bureaus. Today on Khodynka there are not only airplanes, but also gliders, tanks,

cannons, armored cars, machine guns, parachutes, engineering vehicles, naval guns, mines, torpedoes, communications and signaling equipment, fire control devices, uniforms for hot regions and for the Arctic. , concrete-piercing shells, camouflage nets, optics, crossing facilities, barrage balloons, anti-aircraft searchlights, artillery tractors, flamethrowers, and so on and so forth. Today is a demonstration of the latest military equipment. Show to Stalin. Show not only what is, but also what will be. Invisible plane! Will be created almost entirely from transparent material. Only the pilot, engine, propeller and machine guns remain visible, but we will cover them with mirrors.

The project of a super-heavy breakthrough tank. 300 tons! Assembled from three sections, each of which can move independently.

Autogyro! An airplane with a huge horizontal propeller. Capable take off almost vertically. He does not need airfields.

But what is already there and working. The ZUR-4 sound detector detects the appearance of an enemy aircraft over the

horizon! Plane-link. A huge TB-3 bomber, two I-16 fighters are suspended under the wings. Each fighter has two 250-kilogram bombs. The bomber, operating over the sea, over sparsely populated territories, or at night before dawn, delivers fighters over a great distance, drops them and returns. Fighters in deep dives suddenly appear from maximum altitude and deliver a pinpoint strike on a high-value target. They will have enough fuel to return - they almost did not spend it on the flight to the target.

Another TB-3 with a suspended T-37 amphibious tank. The tank is delivered to the rear of the enemy, from an ultra-low height they are thrown into the lake. And then he himself swims to the shore, crawls ashore and smashes the enemies. Saboteurs and paratroopers, even with the lightest tank, are much more fun than without it. And you have to act against important, but vulnerable and unprotected targets. What kind of protection do power plants, oil pipelines, power lines, bridges and railway sidings have in the deep enemy rear? And if all this is defended, then how many divisions should be

removed from the front? The highlight of the program is the high-speed tank BT-7, which was put into service in the past 1935. It still has a riveted cylindrical tower. But a new, welded conical one is already being developed. This tank has the most powerful tank engine in the world - 500 horsepower! Having dropped the tracks, it can develop tremendous speed along freeways. Too bad we don't have freeways. But we have a runway of the Central Airfield! There is a potential to

demonstrate. The tank froze at the start. Airfield freeze. An armored car roared and, having rushed from its place, slipped the entire runway in clubs of gasoline burning. At the other end, the daring driver turned around without slowing down, so that with a wild squeal the beautiful car was carried stern forward. He straightened the tank driver, curbed it like a finicky stallion, and again accelerated almost to the speed of an airplane. This is where the runway ends. The good fellow hit the brakes, the track rollers froze, but the tank, as if on ice, still carried over the concrete in order, decorating the runway with a black trace. Already smoke from the v

tank at the very feet of Comrade Stalin. The grimy driver opened the front hatches. The whole smile blossoms. Comrade Stalin - to him. Shakes hands, hugs: well done! Ah, well done!

And next are the planes. Long range bomber. DB. Beautiful, infectious. Wow, handsome. -

Will we reach the full radius to Berlin? - We'll make it, Comrade Stalin! - And to the Ruhr? -

And to the Ruhr, Comrade Stalin!

- Only the car needs to be brought to the series. To the mind. We would like to complete the test sooner.

Let's finish, Comrade Stalin! - How much is left? "Four

months, Comrade Stalin!" - Can't you do it in a month? - No,

Comrade Stalin. - Why not?

"Physical possibilities,

Comrade Stalin. The test pilot works under inhuman loads. Every flight is a deadly risk. You don't know when you're going to be buried. You sit down after three hours of flight - your hands are trembling, your teeth are chattering. I got out of the cab, you fall on the grass - your legs do not hold. Three days after the flight you come to your senses. Shaking in flight. Wow, it's shaking. The engines either fail on takeoff, or burn in the air. The first test crew was buried - right wing

fell off in flight.

- And if you try, well, not in a month, but in two, you can complete it? —

No, Comrade Stalin. Above human possibilities. The birth of a machine is like the birth of a human. We do not say to a woman: well, try and give birth quickly. If she tries, will she succeed? The baby, of course, can be produced. Or a stillborn car... - Well, not in two months, but in three months, can the tests be completed? "It does not

depend on us, Comrade Stalin. No matter how hard you try, through

you can't jump over the abyss. Such an opportunity is not inherent in a person. "All right," said Comrade Stalin. - OK. And

suddenly he changed

the subject: - And how much does a pilot get for a full test cycle?

"Twenty-five thousand, Comrade Stalin.

Comrade Stalin did not say anything to this, he only moved his chin, expressing a simple thought: wow! And

the test pilots did not say anything, expressing regret: it's not in vain that we spend state money, by the age of thirty everyone is gray-haired, and how many of our test brothers have been written off by disability, how many are chained to beds forever, how many girls scare us with charred muzzles, children up to brings tears, and even more rests in the cemeteries of our brother. "All right,"

Comrade Stalin repeated. He shook hands, wished him success and went to the cargo landing glider designed by Gorokhovsky. And suddenly he turned

around: - And if you
pay a hundred thousand for a full test cycle? — Ha! - said the
testers at once, - Ha! Yes, for a hundred thousand we are her,
Comrade Stalin, in three weeks!

- No need for three weeks. Consult among yourselves. Can you do it in a month?

"We don't need to consult, Comrade Stalin! Three weeks! Communist word!

4

Comrade Stalin cheered up, moving away from the long-range bomber. Here, seizing the moment, Holovanov formed from behind his shoulder:

- Serious material on Yagoda. He steals gold in Kolyma. Stalin
was silent for a while, looking at the ground, turned to Kholovanov and answered so quietly that even an over-the-horizon sound detector could not hear: - Do not touch the

berry. Do not believe in rumors and gossip. Stalin
waited a minute: - You,

Comrade Kholovanov, repeat? I repeat: any work
against Yagoda stop.

5

Yagoda Genrikh Grigorievich is also present at the show today. On another. Show at the NKVD dacha in

Kommunarka. The report is kept by fashion designers. A new uniform for the command staff of the NKVD! Pictures in full human growth are hung on the walls. Here you have a working uniform, and an everyday one, and a front one for the ranks,

and a front-output uniform. Winter and summer. But not only pictures here. There are also samples in kind. Good fellows are dressed in tunics, uniforms, overcoats. They stretched out like Catherine's grenadiers on the parade ground. One thing is a picture, another thing is a living person. Picky Iron Heinrich. He looks closely at each sample, touches it with his hand, delves into the details,

and holds advice with specialists. And the tunics are white with blue piping. And blue - with crimson. There is an ash color, with a scarlet finish. Uniforms - a steel tint, there is some other, inexpressible in words - the color of a sea wave. One is absolutely wonderful: black with white piping. And the cap is the same. There is an unprecedented choice of caps: a white band - a raspberry top, a maroon band - a blue top. You won't remember everyone. Choose, Heinrich Grigorievich! Do your eyes wander? That's it! Prison guards - one thing, convoy troops - another, camp guards - a third, border guards - separately. Border guards - a black velvet band on their caps and a green

top. State security is a special article, this is clear to everyone. This is the highest caste. And in it are the high priests of security. Here is an unusual form for the most important guide. For Commissars of State Security. Iron Henry has 41 of them for the entire Soviet Union: 20 commissars of the 3rd rank, 13 of the 2nd rank, 7 of the 1st rank. Above them is Comrade General Commissar of State Security, Comrade Yagoda. He is, understandably,

singular.

Commissars of State Security - these people with smart, slightly tired eyes. They protect the country from enemies. These people have a special honor, a special uniform: a white uniform of the finest wool on a blue silk lining, blue trousers with blue piping, patent leather shoes, on the sleeve - a small golden sword in a green laurel wreath, on the left side - a blued Zlatoust steel dagger in a gold frame, a hilt - Ivory! Insignia - rhombuses and

stars in buttonholes - it would be possible to carve out some red semi-precious pebbles, and line the laurel wreath on the sleeve with emeralds ... Well, this is not for everyone. This is for the very best.

Secretary of the NKVD Senior Major of the State Security Pavel Petrovich Bulanov blooms. The son of a bitch knew how to please the boss. Under the control of Bulanov, the fashion designers did everything right and ahead of schedule. Now - only the best to choose and approve.

How well the uniform sits on the fellows! All of them are from a special company. Today in Kommunarka there is only one squad from the fourth platoon. Iron Heinrich himself formed this company. Each was personally selected from thousands of candidates. She's actually not even a company. It's just called a company. If you look closely ... In each department - 15 fighters with rifles, grenades, revolvers and a DP light machine gun. There are five squads in a platoon, and a commander with a deputy, and a couple of snipers. There are four platoons in the company, and management, administration, radio operators, a medical unit, rear services, a machine-gun team, a motor transport department ... Everyone in the company is tall, all broad-shouldered, all athletes. The discipline is brutal, the training is cruel: shooting from all types of weapons, hand-to-hand combat, throwing grenades for range and accuracy, an assault strip, marches with full equipment for almost a day, driving cars and motorcycles, demolition and much more. The main thing is the readiness for a feat. These guys run, jump, crawl only under real machine-gun fire, between real grenade explosions, fight in a locked cell with real criminals - and not for life, but to death. Bulanov Pavel Petrovich threw the idea: why not use our knights in the execution of sentences, why not beat those sentenced to death with their feet, rubber sticks, iron rods, developing healthy anger and rage in the soldiers of a special company. They reported to Pavel Petrovich: in the Lefortovo pre-trial detention center, the assistant of the performer, with a blow of brass knuckles in the bridge of his nose, killed the enemy of the people Smirnov, who was sentenced in the first category. Bulanov immediately conveyed this news to Henry. Iron Heinrich asked: who is this henchman?

Bulanov answered: yes, it's a snake-eater! If only his experience could be used for educational purposes for our children!

Heinrich agreed: to spread the experience! Those sentenced in the first category should be used as training material for the development and strengthening of the morale of a special company.

And reward and exalt the Serpent Eater.

6

On the pleasure boat of the Glavspetsremstroy trade union - a production meeting. For two days and two nights they sorted out papers, knocked with knuckles on the abacus, wrote and crossed out numbers in notebooks, added, subtracted, multiplied, divided, wrote again, drew again, counted and recounted. Only Lyuska tried to dodge this case: they say, she was illiterate. She sat in a corner, took out a deck of cards, shuffles, shuffles, and then - r-r-time, and without looking she pulls four aces out of the deck one after another. If he wants to get the lady of spades, he will. Just tell her what card you need, she will immediately throw it on the table. Talented girl. Only the Dragon did not believe that she was illiterate. In what year did you run away from the collective farm? In the 33rd? So there are four classes. Well, sit down next to me, here's a pack of papers for you - you'll figure it out, report back!

So they all figured it out together. The same papers went through everyone: first you look, maybe you will notice something, then I will evaluate it with a master's eye, then I will hand it over to Seich, he has a sharp eye, maybe he will notice something. They worked for a long time, until the green devils in their eyes, until the columns of

numbers in the papers

floated. And what did they come to? We came to the conclusion that everything is correct here. For every Kolyma mine, for every gold-bearing mine, for every mining area, everything

converges without deceit and cheating. It is clear that a lot of gold is stolen. But it's on the little things. Says, let's say, an emaciated enemy twirl: you give me a loaf of bread, so that the real one, without sawdust, and I give you a handful of golden grains of sand. And

for a piece of fat - a nugget. Who will stand? It's hard to fight this. And even impossible. The fool understands: half of the Kolyma gold grains and thin streams goes to the left. It and nothing. Otherwise, all the enemies there would have died of hunger long ago before the arrival of new stages, and all the prey would have d

steal a lot of gold? At each working area, the control is multi-layered. Informers among the prisoners, informers among the freemen, informers among the guards and the administration. Snitches are everywhere. The snitches report to their godfather. The informers report on the godfather to the higher godfather. The informers of an even more worthy godfather report to the informers of a lower one. And the informers of the lower - on the higher. The head of Dalstroy, Comrade Berzin, and all his deputies are surrounded by informers. All their servants - adjutants, bodyguards, drivers, personal pilots and cooks, hairdressers and bath attendants, masseurs and ciphers, teachers and governesses of their children - are recruited by some control bodies and are zealously knocking. Perseverance informers do not hold. Their perseverance is like that of Siberian woodpeckers. Knock over the taiga. The knock is cross, the knock is incessant and all-conquering. And all the bosses know: they are under the gun. Just like those laughing

delegates of the Congress of Victors under the Stalinist squint through sniper optics. — How can you steal at least one ton of gold in this situation? Little things, please. But if it is a large

party, then they will find out about it immediately in different departments and at different levels. - Maybe, Dragon, they don't steal in large quantities there? That's where the documents fit in. There are no inconsistencies

here. Report for each mining area. Everything that is once taken into account on the site, then goes through all the reports. Everything down to the gram. No discrepancies.

"Dragon, can I have a word?" -

Speak, Lyudmil Palna. -

Dragon, how would you yourself be in the place of the head of Dalstroy Comrade Berzin organized the theft of large parties?

- Don't know. The problem is that informers work for different departments that are at war with each other. At any moment, controllers and auditors can roll up from any side. From the Council of People's Commissars, from the People's Commissariat for State Control, from the GUGB, from Glavzolot. Yes, and Comrade Stalin himself is not asleep. He cannot leave such an important public matter without personal control. A snitch can always be right next to you. And how do you know who he's working for. Nobody to rely on can not.

— I would have stolen in this situation.

- How?

— Yes, it's very simple. In our country in the thirty-third year, all neighboring villages were saved from starvation by cannibalism. And we did without it.

Because the chairman was not a fool. Back in the thirtieth year, when everyone was driven to the collective farm, he already figured out what would come of it. Even at that time, he slipped it to someone who should, so that a slip of the pen crept into the papers. Therefore, we had unaccounted hectares on the collective farm, and two unaccounted cows in the herd. If the head of Dalstroy is no worse than our chairman, then he must have an unaccounted for production area.

“Oh, my clever one! Let me kiss you! Indeed, the system of theft can be ridiculously simple. The head of Dalstroy needs to have only one faithful accountant, tied with him by one crime. And let Yagoda himself provide the delivery. Several groups of couriers. One group may not know the other. All couriers were once caught on something, therefore they will not run to report to Stalin. Because there are no informers among them.

This Seich pushed a bunch of papers
aside. And how does the

mechanism work? - Just. All areas of production are permeated with squealing. Let it go. All sites, all mines, all mines submit reports. And that's where it all comes together. In Moscow, the head of Dalstroy sends all the documentation for all sites - except for one. Well, let's calculate how many gold mining sites there are in Kolyma, then we'll calculate how many sites are reported. This has happened to each of us:

you understand a simple thing, and then you see the whole situation in a completely different light, and every detail, every event suddenly takes on a completely different meaning. It would seem, why not assign special numbers to all gold mining sites, why not put them on a separate list? So no. There are a great many protected objects, camp and industrial zones, sites and camp departments in Kolyma. But only a small part is directly involved in gold mining. The rest ensure the fulfillment of the main task: they cut clearings, lay paths, cut down forests, build villages, cities, camps and camp departments, water pumps and power plants, dig coal for the needs of Dalstroy, pull barbed wire, raise power lines and watchtowers into the sky, knock together warehouses, barracks for prisoners and houses for guards,

ships are unloaded. And all these protected objects are brought together in a single list. But for good reason. Mining sites among thousands of other protected objects were lost as if in a crowd. - Well,

accountants, let's do the job that the head of Dalstroy
why didn't you do it? - Let's
do it! - Let's

single out from all protected objects in a separate
the list is those that are directly engaged in gold mining.

We sat down again, the list of protected objects was sifted, just like
a prospector who chooses golden grains from the sand. And
they counted that there are 205 mining sites in Kolyma.
— How many districts have reports submitted? - On
204. - And

which segment was missed? —
Little Chabadan.

Everything is so simple. The simpler, the more reliable. Little Habadan is a normal mining area. Like everyone else. The same work is going on there as in all other areas, mines and mines. The same petty theft flourishes there as elsewhere. This site is also riddled with informers and sexots. Everything that is mined and accounted for there goes to the Dalstroy administration in Magadan. Yes, only in the general statistics the products of Little Habadan are not reflected. And the reporting on two hundred other mines, mines and plots converges to the gram. There are hundreds of thousands of people in Kolyma. Actually, millions. Only while some will be driven, the rest will die out. Work is in full swing. Reporting - wagons. Therefore, it is very easy to miss a report on one of the many mining sites in the flow of papers. Everything is clear to me now. Only on the cover of the blue notebook are these

scribbles are incomprehensible: X - 30, B - 12, X - 27.

"That, Dragon, is the easiest," Sei Seich reasoned. - Where do we have large numbers precede small ones? That's right: the calendar. There are two ways from Kolyma: to the port of Vanino and to Nakhodka. From Nakhodka to Moscow via Vladivostok. And from Vanino through Khabarovsk. "X" is the train "Khabarovsk - Moscow". "B" - "Vladivostok - Moscow". The figures, presumably, are the dates of arrival of trains to Moscow.

- So, the couriers on the train from Khabarovsk will be in Moscow on August 30th. So?

- Think so. - And

this is the day after tomorrow. If they act according to a single scheme, then two with a load should land in Yaroslavl the day after tomorrow, not reaching Moscow. And the third travels lightly to Moscow, they will meet him there, and together with him they will rush by car to Yaroslavl for messengers and goods. So? - Like so. -

Yagoda did not

have time to change the delivery scheme: the couriers are already on their way, and for a long time, and there is no need to keep in touch with them. And there is no need to change the scheme. One courier in Moscow has disappeared, but this loss does not mean at all that the entire chain is not suitable for delivery. What

are we going to do,
Snake?

- We will intercept the goods. - How? - Just. Ruban corner. Suitcase, you say. On the banu-ban-banu, on the banu-jar ruban's suitcase, and thanks to the night.

— The train comes in the

afternoon. - What's the difference? Lyuska, you will put burdocks on my tails, you will go as a lure-distractor. Comrade Holovanov, only Lyudmil Palna needs to be dressed up and decorated. - Let's dress up. Let's decorate. I

have my own people at the Bolshoi Theatre. But how, Snake-eater, do you recognize the couriers? "They are obviously in car

number 6. This is always the best car. The conductor opens the door closest to the head of the train. I will stand at the very place where the car will stop. How do you know where he stops? "You, comrade

Holovanov, don't cut simple things. You need to look where the cigarette butts are densely scattered on the rails. This is a place for coupling wagons. A little to the left will be the door. - And then? Yaroslavl is the last stop before Moscow. There will be very few people in Yaroslavl.

It's not a commuter train. This is a very long distance train. People from afar go to Moscow or even further through Moscow. Who from Siberia, from the Far East, from the Kolyma to Yaroslavl will go? So there are few outgoing ones. There are three couriers on the train. So three suitcases. They don't need too much, but you won't get by with small ones either. And one suitcase with goods. It may be the same size, but it may be smaller. But he is very heavy. It makes no sense to drive people back and forth with a light one. So two men come out

with four suitcases. The third one, who is going further to Moscow, will definitely help them. Also, they are armed. And it can be noticeable if it doesn't rain, if they aren't wearing raincoats. - Okay, okay, you recognized them and figured out which of the suitcases you need to bite. But how, having stolen a heavy suitcase on an almost empty platform, will you run away from three armed men?

The snake-eater laughed. Lucy winks. And she bursts out laughing. - Nowhere, comrade Kholovanov, having cut a corner, there is no need to run away. I'm on I will stand in place. I will smile at them brazenly. So, Lucy? - Yes, Snake. - Fine.

You can see better from the cellar. Only we, brothers, have a problem. And very big. - And what, comrade

Holovanov, is the problem? - The problem is that the gold is being taken to Comrade Yagoda, and Comrade Stalin strictly forbade any work against Comrade Yagoda. If we intercept, we will become not only enemies of Yagoda, but also of Stalin himself. - Why does Stalin not allow work against Yagoda? - I'll

explain it to you later. But this is exactly how things stand: we will become enemies of both Yagoda and Stalin. What we are going to do? "Comrade Holovanov, we will work. No exit. Otherwise, Yagoda will strangle us one by one anyway.

7

The display of the new form has ended. Satisfied Comrade Yagoda. Come out well done marching step.

Bulanov Pavel Petrovich smiled at Iron Heinrich and seemed to even wink: - Life campaign. Iron

Heinrich appreciated

the joke. He smiled and repeated: - Life campaign.

Chapter 9

1

- It will rain. And very strong.
"Why, Snake-Eater, do you think
so?" "And you, comrade Kholovanov, look at the sky. Clouds look
like mountains
and
towers. - And what?
- And what will hit. "All right, soothsayer, let's see what we can do.
Ready
for the
job? - Ready. "Luc, lure-distractor, are
you
ready?" - Ready. - Go, Snake, first.

2

Yaroslavl is a place where the great history of the Russian Land was made for centuries. People have always lived here. Thousands of years before Yaroslav the Wise in 1010 founded the city of his name on the banks of the Volga. The symbol of Yaroslavl is a bear with a golden ax in its paw. The bear is not just strength, but strength in unity with caution, forethought, cunning.

A hardship brought us to the glorious city of Yaroslavl at 6:19 am on a gloomy morning on August 30, 1936, right at the Yaroslavl-Glavny station. From Yaroslavl-Main to the North Station of Moscow 282 kilometers. This is the last stop of courier trains going to Moscow from the Urals, Siberia, and the Far East. We managed to be here at the very moment when, having rumbled along the bridge across the Volga, the Khabarovsk-Moscow courier train smoothly rolls up to the third platform. Express from ordinary passenger differ in that they go at great speed, making stops

only in big cities. The schedule is drawn up so that all other trains - freight, passenger, prisoner, postal, suburban - give way to courier.

There are 39 tracks and four platforms at

the Yaroslavl-Glavny station - one high side and three island ones.

Yaroslavl-Glavny accepts courier trains

coming from Moscow on the first track, going to Moscow - on the fourth and fifth tracks. This is the third high island platform.

Frankly speaking, there is no great joy after a sleepless night to find yourself early in the morning on an empty platform blown by all the winds. You, somewhere in warm latitudes, at the end of August - summer. And in Yaroslavl - rustling, drizzling, drafty autumn. Cold, wet, disgusting. The clouds over Yaroslavl are overloaded with water, they cling to the tops of the pillars. They don't swim, they don't slide, they don't run. They hang in place like barrage balloons, blocking the sky from edge to edge.

There was no Serpent Eater on the third platform at that hour. I do not know why. Maybe he changed the plan, maybe he completely abandoned it. Let's agree: this is not an easy task - to steal a heavy suitcase of thirty kilograms, or even more, on a platform, not to steal from a gaping, rich, satisfied woman who returned from a sweet vacation on the Black Sea shores, you need to steal from two, or even three armed security officers whose heads are responsible for the safety of the cargo. It's good to cut a corner in the crowd, in turmoil, but how to steal, if on the platform there is only an attendant with a whistle in his teeth, a single porter with a cart, yawning at the top of his mouth, and quite rare passengers. There's one over there. And out more. It would be nice to steal on the first platform - here you can dash into the station building and onto the station square. And how to steal on the island platform? The only way from it is through a rumbling iron bridge, which hangs over the tracks, grappling with the clouds. Come on, drag such a weight up the stairs to the gray sky, and then down to the same gray earth. It would be possible to dive under standing echelons. But all the paths, from the first to the tenth, are empty today. And everyone, starting from the eleventh echelons, was packed. So you try to reach them! Having jumped off the third platform, you have to cross two paths, climb onto the fourth platform, cross it, jump off ... And all this in an open place. If a policeman is nearby, he can shoot into the air. Maybe in the butt. Yes and

Chekists, although dressed up as civilians, are also armed. They won't wait for the policeman - they'll riddle him. In addition, right now, Khabarovsk-Moscow is rolling out onto the fifth track, cutting off the road to those distant echelons.

The courier from Khabarovsk creaked its brakes and froze smoothly. The conductor of the sixth car opened the door, letting out those who get off in Yaroslavl. There are only two of them. With four suitcases. Their third companion travels further to Moscow itself. He helps carry the suitcases to the platform. Blocking the passage, an unshaven, smelly, girdled subject with a huge, heavy home-made plywood suitcase climbs into the car, clearly "Made in GULAG": - To Arzamas? - No, this is a train to Moscow. - And I'm on Arzamas! "So not here! - And where on Arzamas? - Fuck you ... The conductor pushed

the subject out of
the vestibule. He helped citizens
to pull out their suitcases
onto the platform.

(These citizens rewarded
the services of the
conductor painfully generously all the way.) A porter in an apron is already hurrying to the sixth car, with a badge on

chest, with a wheelbarrow on two wheels.

At that very moment, a girl of about sixteen appeared near the group of citizens. Dressed in fashion. The aroma of foreign perfumes. The face is pretty, in some ways - a little completely - vicious. You can't figure out what exactly. The eyes are two quiet deep pools in which it is known who is found. Throughout Europe and America, the latest fashion requires women and girls to cut their hair short. But our minx in this matter does not comply with the requirements of fashion. Yes, and it would be a pity to cut this luxury with scissors: her hair is a thick, lush, slightly careless mop, with a lock through her forehead. Either the girl meets her father-boss, or her big uncle-patron. Wow, appetizing. So I would have eaten it. With bones. Russula - neither give nor take. Stopped. Capriciously she raised a cigarette with a gold rim to her lips. (Someone to beat the ass of a juvenile for smoking!) The three immediately put their hands in their pockets. Three lights of lighters flashed in front of her at once. She carefully looked into everyone's eyes, choosing which lighter to light from.

She smiled, as if apologizing: I can't from all three at once! She chose one light, drew it in, lighting it up, dragged on, blowing a trickle of smoke picturesquely over her. And she went past, slightly shaking her graceful stern. Three men sighed, for a long journey through the joys of life

yearning.

And they turned to their suitcases. And all three of them screamed at the same time. The neat suitcase, the one smaller but heavier than the others, was gone. Just like that - took and disappeared. First impulse:

damn girl! And all of a sudden they screamed. And they fell silent. She turned around in surprise. There is nothing in her hands but a cigarette with a gold rim. Yes, and she would not have lifted that suitcase!

And then all three turned to the conductor: where is the suitcase, bastard!? But the conductor is at the door of the car. In the vestibule. a meter away from them. If he had jumped to them imperceptibly, if he had jumped back with a heavy suitcase in his hand, then next to him in the vestibule there should now be a suitcase. But there is none. And then all three of them turned at once to the smelly, girded guy with a rope. He is nearby too. They just pushed him out of the vestibule, explaining that this train was not going to Arzamas at all. So he stands, his mouth open, with a dumb question on his stupid unshaven head: so where is Arzamas? It's disgusting to look at

him. Turns back from a nasty look. Until vomiting. He is wearing a dirty, torn prison padded jacket, obviously lousy. The stench from him is like a walking garbage can. His heavy plywood suitcase is all tied up with ropes, there are two rusty padlocks on it, the handle is made of disheveled ropes, all shaggy, like that dog whose eyes are not visible under the coat. The passenger, the one who must go to Moscow, snatched out a

neat little foreign pistol: I'll kill you to hell! The silly type blinks his eyes: what do I have to do with it? Take my suitcase, good citizens, just don't touch me. I'll take the

last one off if you need it. Here are tarpaulin boots, completely, however, worn down. And take off your footcloths?

The girl ran up: what's the noise? She was sent off politely: poof, lahudra! Bring down the sack, pull out the legs! The girl was offended, pouted her lips, and walked away arrogantly.

Two passengers, those who had to go to Yaroslavl, scanned the platform with their eyes. But it's empty all around. Take my word for it: it was empty there, disgusting and wet. The abysses of heaven opened up, faces were flogged with a fine rain.

The one with the pistol who looked into the vestibule. But there is no suitcase. Did you fall under the wagon? He couldn't get in there. The platform is high, a cigarette butt will not fly between the side of the car and the wall of the platform. Only there cigarette butts fall down, where the wagons are coupled. But there is no suitcase.

Then it dawned on one: yes, we couldn't take him out of the compartment! And he rushed there, throwing the conductor from the door. The head of the train appeared, yawning, rubbing his eyes, buttoning his uniform as he went. Behind him is that passenger, who had just been illuminated by an idea of salvation, and now, as if crushed by a cart: there is no

suitcase in the carriage. No!!! But it was so clear. Everyone remembers that you carried the same suitcase from

the car. Here he should be! "Document," yells the passenger with the gun. — Document! The smelly subject reached into his bosom, exposing his chest in blue pictures, not washed for at least a couple of years. For a long time I shifted different things from pocket to pocket, trying to find what was required. In the bowels of his pants, shirts and padded jacket, there was once a red, and now of an obscure color, a pouch with shag, a lighter from a Vertukhai cartridge case, two pieces of sugar, black with dirt, an onion half gnawed, a deck of cards with naked women, so greasy that the women are only guessed by the outlines. Finally, I found the required document - a folded fourfold, worn on the folds, formerly white, but now gray with yellow smudges and streaks, a tattered sheet.

From the document with a blurred purple seal and the signature of the deputy head of the GULAG, head of the Dmitlag of the NKVD of the USSR, senior major of the State Security Comrade S. Firin, it followed that citizen Paisiy Evlampievich Svinarenko was released from the institution of FK 15/5 at the end of the term of imprisonment. The certificate certified that citizen Svinarenko, convicted under Article 153, the most dirty in all of Criminal Code-26, had served his term from start to finish, and this paper had been issued by the administration of the institution for presentation to local authorities, otherwise they would not give a new passport. - Gang rape?

"It's not my fault," Citizen Svinarenko yelled. - She herself! - Where,

bastard, is the suitcase? - Take

mine! I didn't take your suitcase! I'm standing with you. - And he roared, smearing tears on his unshaven hare with a dirty paw. Back in the zone, huh? Again? I'm standing with you! Again, right?

It was only then that three of them guessed to pay attention to the porter. He jumped up a long time ago, froze in the pose of "whatever you want." All attention is on him: are you a bastard? He spreads his hands: search the citizens, maybe I hid your

suitcase in my bosom. The best time for me would be to say that this porter is something I saw it and I was about to say a word, but when I ran into a glance...

But I will not tell you, citizens, this, because the porter did not see a damn thing. He stood quietly in a respectful pose, waiting to be trusted to put on his hump and drag the load. He didn't want to say anything to anyone. And didn't try. And not at all because I ran into someone's leaden look. It didn't have that look. /I tell you right about

I declare this.

He just understood what was happening: the stray was working. And in such a case, one does not work. Partners are nearby, although they are not visible. Say a word - they will tie up the garbage of the guest performer, but on the same day you will get a pike in the liver from the war partners. The station is the station. "Ban". And indecent girls hunt for a bathhouse, and pluckers rummage around in their pockets, and those who work that cut corners. It is not recommended for a porter to poke his nose into these matters. The less you know the better you sleep. And a guarding tongue may

save the head. So there is no use from the porter either. Silent. And he doesn't have the missing suitcase. And he is not able to tell anything interesting, and he does not want to say anything, even if he had something to say.

The bell rang. A dull chime floated over the platform. Do you know how trains used to leave? I explain. First, three strikes on the bell: ding, ding, ding. With a break. Then a long shrill whistle from the station attendant. On his side, instead of a bag, he has two leather cylinders for flags, yellow and red. These are the most visible colors. (And in the dark, he has a lantern with red and green light.) Yellow flags were never unfurled. Because it turned out that it was not like a flag, but a wand in

hand. He holds that wand in front of him, letting him know that everything is in perfect order. The conductors on the steps of the carriages froze, informing them of the order with yellow flags. If something is wrong with someone in one car, he will unfold the red flag, and all the others will immediately repeat his signal, so that both the driver and the station attendant can see it. If order is everywhere, if only the yellow flags are up, then the locomotive hums lingeringly and slowly, as if reluctantly, departs, pulling the train behind it, picking up speed. For the sake of gaping on the platform, the driver will not violate the schedule. Gaping pictures of the order do not violate. Those who gape don't count, let them catch up. Let the next time on the first call take place. The bell

rang, the attendant whistled, the locomotive honked, and the Khabarovsk-Moscow softly and smoothly, sedately, with dignity, as a courier train should, set off. The one with

the pistol did not jump up, but flew into the vestibule, the stopcock jerked. He threw not only the conductor, but now also the head of the train out of his way. The courier creaked, creaked, froze.

At this point, the head of the train used power: who are you, roaming around with a trellis? What right do you have to break the schedule? Do you know what the penalty for doing this is? *I'm* calling the police, and don't wave the trellis in front

of my nose. I had to stick a red crust with a sword and shield in his nose: know, dog, who you are dealing with - the GUGB

of the NKVD of the USSR! Two people with suitcases on the platform would also have drawn their pistols a long time ago, but they understand: the police will swoop in, and oh, how I don't want to start a scandal. It is not recommended to draw attention to yourself and to the cargo. Especially for the lost. Therefore, to the third, who is in the

vestibule, they wave their hands: quietly, no noise, send! The courier started again. This time with a jerk, nervously somehow. Past that passenger in the vestibule, who has a State Security certificate in one hand and a trellis in the other, floated a platform with the inscription in gold letters "Yaroslavl Chief", floated two of his comrades with muzzles twisted from horror and misunderstanding, a girl with a cigarette floated, a porter with a stroller his own, and the smelly one, belted with a rope. His face is stained with tears. Lips tremble in fear. And the eyes are cheeky.

Last time, a courier from Kolyma disappeared at the North Station in Moscow. He was never found. Therefore, this time everything has been done to ensure that the courier does not disappear. This time, two cars are waiting for the courier at once - if one of the wheels bursts, there

is a second one. Here is Khabarovsk-Moscow. Solemnly and majestically, the courier train makes the last stop in its duty for many thousands of kilometers.

All the way to Moscow, a passenger from the GUGB, who lost his suitcase in Yaroslavl, sat in his empty compartment, staring at one point. Having

familiarized himself with the contents of a small scarlet certificate, the head of the train fell silent. And the conductor too. They both dared to knock on the door at nine in the morning and ask if they needed tea. But there were sent...

What does this whole incident mean? Where could the suitcase go?

Where? Good thought comes later. The girl was clearly distracted. It was necessary to immediately grab her by the lush hair and drag her into the car. This girl is a thread! Why did this thought not come there, on the platform? Or you shouldn't have taken the train! It was necessary to stay in Yaroslavl and sort things out on the spot. No! It was impossible to do this! Why? Because the suitcase right now can be on the train. If he could disappear from the platform like this, he could return to the train.

And those two lazybones that remained in Yaroslavl, will they guess to grab the girl? Will they be able to explain themselves to the police without drawing attention to everything that happened?

And who stole the suitcase? Porter? Or is it a conductor? Or that smelly gang rapist? Wow, what impudent eyes that smelly one has. Why cheeky? Yes, simply because the serfs are always happy when the master is in trouble. Or is he? But where could he hide the suitcase?

Thought seeks salvation. Thought leads a person away from bitter experiences. Here is the very end of the road. Hand over the cargo, report, and - to Sanduny! Evaporate. Then the restaurant is chic! In "Aragvi"! And to friends! To girlfriends! And having slept off - to the theater, to the cinema. Which

the movie is out! It's called "Circus". Lyubov Orlova and Sergey Stolyarov! People are taking cinemas by storm. The film has not yet reached the outskirts, and the song from the film is already ringing in Vladivostok, Khabarovsk, and Kolyma: "My native country is wide, there are many forests, fields and rivers in it, I don't know another such country where it is so free man breathes!

In the cinema. To the circus. Yes, friends! When there is a lot of money in pockets, there are a lot of girlfriends. Just choose which one is sweeter. And after walking around Moscow - on the way back. Two weeks without worries and troubles, sit in the window, look, play cards and have a bite of vodka. That's life!

And that's where it all fell apart. What will happen to us? What will happen to me? After all, Iron Heinrich will shoot. Will sew up a case of espionage in favor of Honduras. Maybe shoot yourself? Eh, my country, where it is so free ... Eh, the circus! In the circus... In the circus... But in the circus they hide anything. Right in the arena, right under the gaze of hundreds of pairs of eyes simultaneously from all directions... What does all this mean? Just a thief took and stole? Then after all
nothing particularly terrible. There is so much gold in Kolyma.

The next group of couriers is already on the way, and after it - more and more.

But if this is someone's purposeful work? Whose? Four hours of woeful reflections to Moscow. And no light. And no bright idea.

Here it burst out from all the speakers: "Citizens passengers, our train is arriving in the capital of our great Motherland and the entire world proletariat, the city of Moscow!" The messenger from Kolyma decided
not to shoot at the temple for the time being. Perhaps it will carry. — Hello, Mikhail Borisych, how did you get there? - Thanks, that
sucks. - Two cars are
ready for a trip to Yaroslavl. - No need to go to Yaroslavl. Take me
to Kommunarka, to Comrade Yagoda's dacha.

I told you that there was no Serpent Eater on the third platform of the Yaroslavl-
Glavny station at the time of the loss of the suitcase. This I was wrong. Deceived. I
messed up. Maha gave. I believe and insist

I recommend to everyone to admit their mistakes immediately and decisively. Do not persist in stupidity. I start with myself, I take my words back: there was a Serpent Eater on that platform at that very hour. I just didn't recognize him. He was looking for a way to Arzamas. But he did not need Arzamas at all. I had to cut the corner. And then rush to Moscow. And as soon as possible. That's why the car is foreign. "Ford" six-seater. Comrade Holovanov himself was the driver. The snake-eater with Lyuska-Russula are passengers.

But before you rush to Moscow, you need to put yourself in order, clean up the traces of participation in a troublesome

business. At Holovanov, a place was chosen in advance - along the Volga, below the glorious city of Yaroslavl. The Dragon taxied out of the road, in the thick willows the engine was turned off. Take off, Snake, all the dirt from yourself. All rags - in a plywood suitcase. And you, Lucy, undress. Pity the wig? It's a pity. What a luxury. These are not sold in the store. And the foreign outfit is a pity? Nothing, life is more precious. Caught with these rags - will not regret it. And at the Bolshoi Theater, the right people will write off all this stuff at the end of the year. They loaded the

suitcase, Holovanov stuffed something like a bar of gray laundry soap inside. The Serpent-eater and Holovanov swam out far into the rapids, holding on to the floating suitcase like a raft, and let it drift with the flow. The place is wild. Nobody around. Yes, and not long for that suitcase to swim. Fukulo here something in the depths of plywood. The flame seething from all the cracks escaped. So swim and burn blue

fire.

The snake-eater washed up, Holovanov sprinkled something inside the car, weathering the stench of the prison padded jacket. Is that suitcase neat here? Here he is. Do not touch it with bare hands, only with gloves. Let's take off the fingers. Let's perpetuate for history!

What's inside? Soldier's flasks inside. Heavy, like lead shot stuffed. Golden grains of sand are carried in bottles. But so that the bottles are not beaten by chance, flasks are better suited for this purpose. And in the box - lumps of nuggets.

Here the rain hit, Foretold by the Snake-Eater, but still sudden, thick, merciless, like artillery shelling. Drops of shrapnel struck, flooding the windshield with streams. But all three are already in the car. All already washed and dried. The Dragon poured into three piles. They drank to success and rushed to Moscow.

It was customary at all times to chop off the head of the messenger who brought the bad news. Because of this, Vladyka somehow felt better. The messenger himself had no idea what kind of news he was carrying. He only wondered what awaited him: a handful of gold, a sable fur coat from the king's shoulder, or a chopping block

with icicles of blood frozen in the cold. The uninvited messenger, who, without a call or invitation, appeared at the NKVD dacha in Kommunarka, knew what kind of news he had brought. Moreover, he did not deliver bad news to anyone, but he himself is the main culprit. There is only one hope: the sword does not cut a guilty head. Guilty, Heinrich Grigoryevich! Guilty! I'm sorry, Comrade General Commissar of State Security.

Or maybe it's not supposed to be called a comrade of Iron Henry now, but a citizen's boss? Genrikh Grigoryevich

Yagoda never yelled at his subordinates. He knew that shouting would not help matters. He listened in silence, occasionally tapping with the nail of his index finger on the mirrored walnut rectangle of the top of the desk that had once stood in the study of Alexander the Third.

The messenger understands that things are bad. So he doesn't know everything. All he knows is that he blew a suitcase filled with golden sand. If only this! Golden sand in Kolyma is unmeasured. Wash as much as you want. But last time the courier went missing. A very unpleasant pattern emerges. In one group of couriers, the senior with a portfolio of documents disappears without a trace, in the next group, the cargo disappears. This means that the loss of a suitcase is not an accidental theft, but someone's workshop, a premeditated and carefully prepared work. Whose? Kolya Yezhov, a scumbag, a vile dwarf,

a secretary in the Central Committee, is he, or what? Or are they sitting on their own? Dalstroy is part of the Gulag. The head of Dalstroy, Berzin, supplies Yagoda with gold in a direct way, bypassing the head of the GULAG, State Security Commissioner of the 3rd rank, Matvey Berman. If Berman got wind of it, he might take the opportunity. He has been dreaming of currying favor with Gultalin for a long time.

Or is someone higher in rank working? Yashka Agranov! First Deputy Berries! Commissar of State Security 1st rank! Is he? But in the subordination of Agranov GUGB. This is the NKVD within the NKVD. Agranov could sniff out. Maybe share it with him? Share what? Kolyma booty? Or plans for the future? So after all, Agranov is aiming for Yagoda's place. And how long. Share it with him, he will report to Gotalin and sit in the People's Commissar's chair himself. It is clear that

someone from the immediate environment is working. Don't get used to it. Trilisser planted such a pig in 1930! But he was a deputy, creeping bastard! Yes, the situation. What to

do? What to do? The first step is to stop all supplies. Encryption at Dalstroy: to detain and return the messengers, not to send more yet, to be ready for the appearance of the auditors. This is the first. And secondly, it is necessary to calculate the enemy's move, although not yet

it's clear who he is.

So, someone - Yezhov, Berman, Agranov, no matter who - somehow figured out the scheme, then stole the messenger at the North Station, hid it somewhere, learned the dates of arrival of the next groups of couriers through him. The first loss in Moscow, the second in Yaroslavl, the third, if the logic is followed, will be somewhere even further from Moscow, up to Khabarovsk and Vladivostok. The first time a person is stolen, the second time - a cargo, in the third coming capture - they will take the whole group.

Iron Heinrich raised his eyes and only now remembered that in front of him for a long time, having reported everything, silently stretched out the head of the group of couriers, Captain of State Security Davydov Mikhail Borisovich.

"What are we going to do, Comrade Captain of State Security?"

"I don't know, Comrade General Commissar.

We will analyze errors. What mistakes have you made? Didn't stop the girl. - Right. More? - It

was necessary to

arrest the porter, the station attendant and that smelly type, to push him into the compartment and take him with him to Moscow. This would be sorted out.

- That's right too. What was that guy's name? - Not Paisiy Svinarenko, not Nikifor.

- Either Paisios, or Nicephorus ... You were holding a document in your hands, you read it, you did not remember the name. And after that, you, comrade captain of the State Security, dare to call yourself a Chekist? "Sorry,

Comrade General Commissar. - Let's do this:

I'm now calling the deputy head of the Gulag, the head of Dmitlag, Comrade Firin. You go to him. He will present all the lists of all those released from Dmitlag this year, if necessary - and in the previous one. Find the case of this one girded with a rope. There are many thousands of people in Dmitlag, but only a few come out of there. Because your job is easy. Do not try to tell Firin or anyone else who and why you are looking for. Only I'm afraid that you won't find anyone girded with a rope in the affairs of Dmitlag. But we will use another option. Go. If you work hard, I will forget everything and forgive.

Yagoda knew that the best workers are guilty. Give me the opportunity to redeem - he will turn mountains, dig channels, break the ice at the pole, rake and melt. And Iron Henry understood

a long time ago: nothing humiliates a boss like unbridled anger. The boss is always calm. Even on the edge of the abyss.

6

A huge six-seater Ford rushes through the pouring rain, at first it cuts the bad weather and darkness with its headlights, and then crushes the wall of rain with its rhinoceros forehead.

Water is pounding on the tarpaulin awning as if tons of lead shot is being poured from a dump

truck. - You, Snake, well done. I never thought that you had such talents - you need to predict the weather, that you grab a suitcase. And you, Lucy, well

done! Lyuska was silent from Yaroslavl itself, but since the Dragon himself turned to her, she

also spoke. "But no one knows what we did. - Nobody.

- Of course, I'm joking, but if you divide the suitcase into three, it's enough for a lifetime. Unless, of course, everything is blown into the cards at once. Draco didn't say anything to that. So until Moscow itself, they were silent.

7

If a worker at a garment factory stole two hundred meters of sewing material, then the most humane and just worker-peasant government in the world measures her a full-fledged Gulag term. And then the tower. Two hundred meters of

sewing material - this is how they enter into the sentence. This is to sound ominous. Two hundred meters of sewing material is a spool of thread.

The law of August 7, 1932 "On the protection of property of state enterprises, collective farms and cooperation and the strengthening of socialist property" provides for execution with confiscation of property for theft of goods from railway transport, as well as state, collective farm and cooperative property. Under mitigating circumstances, execution may be replaced by imprisonment for at least ten years with confiscation of property. So the one who was sold for ten, fifteen or twenty years of the Gulag for stealing two hundred meters of sewing material should rejoice: he was lucky, they could have slapped him.

Among the people, this concern of the worker-peasant government for the preservation of socialist property is called the "Law on three spikelets." In that terrible 1932, in the most grain-producing regions of the country, millions of people died of hunger in wild torments, because bread was exported. And the one who dared to collect spikelets that fell from the harvester, which no one needed, was shot. Or, under extenuating circumstances, at least ten with confiscation ...

What can we say about the head of Dalstroy, who steals not sewing material and spikelets not thrown into the field? In the intercepted suitcase alone, 32 kilograms 263 grams of gold sand and six nuggets with a total weight of 413 grams were found and registered. And how many of those suitcases did the head of Dalstroy Yagoda transport? And how much did you pay for yourself? Where is his emolument

circumstance? He does not have an emollient, he has an aggravating. He is the boss. He's on duty. And the recipient is Comrade Yagoda himself. How much does he need to pay for such things?

- Well, Dragon, did Comrade Yagoda get caught? — No, Sey Seich, I didn't get

caught. — How so? - Yes, it's the same. Yagoda did not receive this cargo, we will not be able to prove that the cargo was addressed to him. Who knows, maybe the recipient is one of Yagoda's deputies, and he himself actually knows nothing.

- We can do this! The courier has disappeared, only Yagoda and his personal secretary Bulanov know about it. Only they are looking for the missing courier. So the load is for

them. - All right, Sey Seich, you will prove to Stalin that Yagoda is at the head of all this theft, but only Stalin will not do anything. For Yagoda, and not so listed. In 1930, Yagoda's deputy, comrade Trilisser, collected the documents. It followed from the documents that Yagoda composed and invented his heroic biography. And it also followed from the documents that the revolutionary Yagoda was a provocateur of the tsarist police. - And ... - And Comrade Stalin showed

Yagoda

the documents, said that he did not believe the documents, and threw Trilisser from his high post. Scammer - the first whip! Now Trilisser is a petty boss in some kind of commission to control something. This is the deepest fall from the position of deputy head of the secret police. The fall is not over. Trilisser is still flying down. With a whistle. And, I think, he will fly to the very bottom. So you and I will collect evidence, lay out all of them to Stalin and get hit in the neck. And Yagoda will add. "But why?" - Because the main danger for Stalin now is not in the NKVD, but in the party itself, from all

stripes of Trotskyists,

Zinovievites, Bukharinites. Yagoda has his own plans, his own interests, but for the time being they coincide with Stalin's interests. The whole system of power is extremely shaky. The Party, the Army, the NKVD are like three sheaves in a field, leaning on each other. Remove one and the rest will collapse. And Stalin is on top - on three staggering ones. How

as soon as someone removes Yagoda, so the party comrades will eat Stalin. Yes, and in the Army there are plenty of

people who want to. "But if Yagoda himself is preparing a conspiracy?" But Stalin does not believe

this. — Yes, why? - Yes, because Yagoda has no less enemies than Stalin himself. And the only way to fight against Yagoda is to start a rumor that he is preparing a coup. Stalin understands this too. That's why he doesn't believe in rumors. Evidence is needed.

- I have no proof. But we have another clue. — Speak, Sey Seich. "We need to put forward such a thing against Yagoda so that no one dares to defend him. Even Stalin.

- What will you put forward? -

In 1918, Yagoda was a participant in the assassination attempt on Lenin.

Chapter 10

1

She looked around: where had it taken her? There was a knock on the door: will you feed? Otherwise, from Konotop to Moscow, she herself did not remember about food, and no one reminded her. Now I realized that here you need to protect your rights, otherwise they will trample, crush and crush.

"Hey, who's there, wake up to starve - I'll compose a complaint to Comrade Kalinin!" A

rough female voice answered her:

"The Tambov wolf is your friend." Don't knock, they'll bring it now. She looked around again: where

am I? The bolts rumbled, the door opened, one woman in the blue beret of the State Security Service brought in a tray, the other remained in the

doorway, playing with a rubber club. The aunt put

the tray on the table and removed the napkin. And they both

left, again slamming the door, rattling the bolts. And our girl's doubts disappeared. So it's in the Kremlin! Where else? Where are the walls of such thickness, where are the vaults? Where can you find such patterned gratings, like they were made by jewelers? Where is it so clean and dry, where is the air in the basement so fresh? And where are the prisoners fed like that? This is clearly not a prison. This

is a room in which only sometimes especially important prisoners are hidden. The night is deep, so there is no soup, no chops with French-fried potatoes, but there are sandwiches of black fragrant bread with butter, mustard, slices of ham and smoked sausage. And the tea is hot, cool, the color of cognac. But it wasn't tea or sandwiches that convinced her.

Convinced tray, plates and starched napkin. So where is such a life for prisoners? Not in Kolyma! And not on Solovki. Yes, this is the Kremlin! And they brought her all this not out of respect, not out of respect. It's just that here, in the Kremlin, they don't know how to feed anyone differently.

We would be glad to treat you with camp gruel, but they are not trained. She did not eat. Achieved - the first victory! Next is the hunger strike. In protest

pick up your tray. So,

this is the Kremlin. And where in the Kremlin? It could be either the Terem Palace or the Poteszny Palace. Or perhaps the Senate. And why not the Grand Kremlin Palace? And really, why not?

The room in which she is located is still not a basement and not the first floor. This is a plinth, this is a powerful pedestal of the palace. Why do you need a basement? Then, to raise the first floor higher above the ground. Simply put, to raise its windows to such a height that they do not look into them from the street. This also increases safety. If the huge windows of the first floor are closed with bars, it will be very ugly. But if the floor is raised above the ground, then gratings can be dispensed with. But the small windows of the basement floor are in bars, this does not spoil the view. On the contrary, it gives the building solidity. The basement should be heavier and stronger than the rest of the building, even in appearance.

A building with a basement looks completely different. But it's not just aesthetics. In the basement there is how much you can fit. Nastya stretched out on a soldier's bed, closed her eyes and tried to draw in her imagination the ideal plinth of the palace, based on the assumption: if only I were a queen.

2

Sei Seich's story turned out to be simple and short.

In 1918, when he was taken to the Kremlin guards, there were three leaders: Lenin, Trotsky, Sverdlov. Lenin and Trotsky towered over the country like two cliffs. And Sverdlov is in the shadows. Outside the walls of the Kremlin, few people knew him, few had any idea of his role. But he was the main one. Sverdlov came from among the terrorists of the most extreme sense. All life from early youth - in the terrorist underground. And suddenly - the ruler of

Russia. Sverdlov did not make fiery speeches, did not write fundamental works that could decorate the golden fund of Marxism, he did not swear with anyone. But he controlled everything. He could not stand disagreements with his colleagues from the Kremlin hut, he did not initiate all-Russian debates and discussions. For some reason, those who disagreed with him died quickly.

So Comrade Sverdlov grappled with Lenin. But he didn't argue for a long time: you have such an opinion, and I have another, let's not argue. It looks like they reconciled. There seems to be no disagreement between them. But once a week, all the party leaders, except for Sverdlov himself, went to factories, regiments and divisions, or even just on the square, made speeches to the crowds of people. Sverdlov held all this in his hands, ordered: you in Presnya to reason with the people, you - in the square in front of the Bolshoi Theater.

It was the very end of August. It's just like now. Sverdlov appointed Lenin the Michelson plant for the speech. And it so happened that Sverdlov sent all the leaders with guards, and security guards to Lenin at that time.

didn't get the day.

Lenin arrived at the factory only with his driver - no one from the factory committee meets Lenin. Dissuaded by Lenin in the workshop, he goes out to his car - no one from the factory committee sees him off. And then, on a dark evening, unknown people shoot at Lenin. Chekists grab a woman in the street named Fanny Royd, she is Kaplan. There is no evidence against her. No witnesses, no physical evidence. This woman, if not obviously crazy, then, in any case, was very close to it. And she confessed. Sverdlov immediately takes her away from the Cheka and locks her in his personal

prison. The proletarian leader Comrade Sverdlov lived in the royal chambers, and right under his office in the basement of the Grand Kremlin Palace he kept personal prisoners. After being transferred to the Kremlin, no one else disturbed the alleged

perpetrator of the terrorist act, Fanny Kaplan. No one interrogated her, did not conduct investigative experiments, did not compare fingerprints, did not calculate the trajectory of bullets, did not interrogate, and did not even look for witnesses.

September 3, 1918, on the fourth day after the assassination attempt on Lenin, Fanny Kaplan was killed on the orders of Sverdlov by the commandant of the Kremlin Pashka Malkov in the Kremlin garage to the sound of a running engine. Where there is a garage, there is gasoline. Malkov put the corpse in an iron barrel, filled it with gasoline and burned it.

No one tried the alleged perpetrator of the assassination attempt on the leader of the proletarian revolution, no one proved her guilt,

didn't figure out the connections. By order of Comrade Sverdlov - ends in a barrel of gasoline. And burn with a blue flame.

It is not known whether Fanny Kaplan shot Lenin or not. It is unclear how many terrorists there were. But obviously not less than two. They fired from two directions, from two different pistols. It is not clear who was behind the assassination attempt, but it is clear who

covered their tracks. For comrade Sverdlov, not even that is listed. He used the assassination attempt on Lenin as a pretext for the start of the "Red Terror" throughout the country. A bloody wave of mass shootings of hostages rolled across the expanses of Russia as the revenge of the proletariat on the exploiters for their villainous attempt on Comrade Lenin.

But Sverdlov was a little hasty. He appealed to the country that the terrorists fired at Lenin... 40 minutes before the first shot. Lenin, still in a dirty, dimly lit shop, painted the charms of the coming decades, the perpetrators of the terrorist act in their shelter were still nervously looking at their watches, and Comrade Sverdlov in the Kremlin already knew: the crime had been committed! Unfortunately for Sverdlov, Lenin's wounds were

not fatal. Lenin was taken to a country estate and treated there. Sverdlov meanwhile advanced to the first role already openly. Now he traveled around the country in the tsarist train, now he, like the sun, showed his face to the crowds of people, now his portrait was carried at demonstrations ahead of the portraits of Lenin and Trotsky.

But Lenin survived. And got better. Then Sverdlov tried by all means not to let Lenin into the Kremlin, explaining this by concern for health. But Lenin returned. And then Comrade Sverdlov fell into a losing streak. That night in Moscow, unknown raiders attacked his car, then suddenly his royal bedroom caught fire, and for the sake of safety, someone locked the doors from the outside. Fortunately, there was no lattice on the window, jumped out

sovereign.

In March 1919, Sverdlov was returning to Moscow from a trip around the country. The armored train "Karl Marx" is in front, followed by an ordinary outside, luxurious inside the train of the ruler of Russia. In the closure - a train of Latvian mercenaries. Comrade Sverdlov appeared from the doors of the car at the stations of large cities to the thunder of the orchestra, greeted the squealing fans with a white palm.

But where there is a station, there is a repair of the track, the Civil War, after all, there are rails, sleepers, nuts, bolts with which the rails are fastened one to another. It is not known whether this was organized by Lenin or someone else, whether it was a spontaneous manifestation of the working class's ardent love for their own government, but Sverdlov was bombarded with huge nuts. The guards did not have time to protect and cover him, and one, heavy, poked him in the forehead. That was enough. Whether Lenin was involved or not, but after burying Sverdlov and crying over the coffin, he immediately kicked out the commandant of the Kremlin, Pashka Malkov, who covered up the traces of Sverdlovsk adventures.

It was after that that Seich Seich decided to rake a little from that troublesome security work, citing his health. How can you refer, if you are healthy, like a Kuban bull? You just won't leave. In the protection of the leaders - it's like in a gang, the path is one way. No exit. Sey Seich found a way out: he stopped recognizing people, laughed for no reason, yelled in his sleep at night, during the day he talked to himself in different voices. He was sent for treatment. He delayed the treatment. Yes, so little by little, and lost. And he chose such a profession for himself, so that on

don't sit in one place.

- Everything is great, Sei Seich, but how is this whole story with Yagoda

connected? - Tied with a strong knot. Even in his childhood and youth, Yagoda worked for a jeweler, Sverdlov's father, and lived with his family. Heinrich Yagoda and Yashka Sverdlov grew up together. Yagoda is married to some relative of Sverdlov. All his rise Sverdlov provided. Yagoda is a participant in the dark affairs of

Sverdlov. - And

then? - Further - interesting. They killed Sverdlov, but they failed to open his royal safe. It was a safe—a safe for all safes. For the royal treasures, they were specially brought from Britain on a cruiser, and even here they remade the castle. Sverdlov kept the most important thing in that safe. Where are the keys? There are no keys. Yakov Mikhalych trusted no one. So I myself, with ten men, dragged that safe, locked, with a winch through the window from his office. - And

where is he now? -

Then we handed over that safe to the Kremlin warehouse. That's where I think it's worth. There may be documents on how the assassination attempt on Lenin

prepared. Maybe there is something for Yagoda. We should open that safe. Yes, in the presence of witnesses. Yes, read those documents. - Let's open it. "We just need to come up with some reason that we suddenly remembered the safe, which has been locked for two decades now. We'll come up with a reason.

3

Sey Seich received under the command of Glavspetsremstroy-12. I will not describe this train to you now. Another time somewhere in the future somehow another time sometime later. If I don't forget. Outwardly, the train looks like a repair train. It was disguised as a repair shop in order to attract less attention from outsiders.

The first task of this Seich is to immediately deliver three passengers to Leningrad: the Dragon, Lyuska and the Snake-Eater. Why they need to be taken to St. Petersburg and what they forgot there, no one explained to Seich. He himself was not used to asking: since it was said to go to St. Petersburg, then it was necessary. The Dragon didn't explain anything to

Lyuska and the Serpent Eater either. We arrived without incident. Rushed quickly, without stopping. This Seich thrust a fashionable book into the snake-eater: Aleksey Tolstoy, "The Hyperboloid of Engineer Garin." He unfolded that book Snake-Eater, and so for the whole journey he did not come off. And Lyuska climbed into a free compartment and with a masterful wave scattered the deck on the table - her fingers

require constant training. Kholovanov looked at her only once. - Lyudmil Palna, you are probably all painted with pictures

under your clothes? "Ah, Leksan Vanych, I wanted to do everything, but I couldn't get myself together. In tender places I dreamed of having something that took the soul: "Love me, and I love you." But there is a sign: happy tattoos are only those that are mastered in kitschman. And I haven't gotten around to it yet. I don't have tattoos on tender places. Do you want to check?

And the eyes are arrogant, like those of the Serpent Eater, the corner of the cut.

In Leningrad, "Glavspetsremstroy-12" climbed into some kind of grass overgrown dead end between the brick walls of abandoned workshops with smoked broken windows. This Seich stayed on the train. And Kholovanov with Lyuska and Zmееed left.

On someone's command, someone put the car. Right before the train arrives. Minute to minute. Everything works fine here. Not like Comrade Yagoda when meeting a messenger

from Kolyma. From the station - to Krestovsky Island. To the yacht club. "So this is the same place where engineer Garin, leaving persecution, stole the Bibigonda, the best racing yacht!?"

"This, Serpenteater, is the very place. "And... why are we here?" - Now you will see. Where engineer Garin had once cut the ends of the Bibigonda, now two torpedo boats were rocking on the waves among the grove of masts.

Two buildings side by side. - Wow! "This, Serpenteater, is not two boats. It is one. Dual. The two bodies are almost pressed against each other. Between them are four torpedo tubes. On two floors. Two and two. Aircraft designer Andrei Nikolaevich Tupolev created the G-5 torpedo boat - aircraft material, aircraft engine, corresponding speed. No one in the world has one like it. The boat was taken into service. And Tupolev is not appeased. On his own initiative, he took it and connected the two buildings. Got a catamaran. 2-G-5. Seaworthiness is exceptional. Tests completed. But so far such a boat has not been adopted for service. Possibly never accepted and never will be. Naval commanders need something simpler. Ordinary G-5 is quite suitable for them. In the meantime, we are using this twin boat for our own purposes, pretending that all our trips to the sea are a continuation of the tests. Welcome!

Kubrick turned out to be quite suitable for human habitation. Something looks like a reserved seat car: the lower shelf, the upper one, the table is tiny. Only there is no window. And not so spacious - some pipes along the bulkheads, cranes, measuring instruments with dials, two

red fire extinguishers, the phone is such that the handset does not dangle during

pitching. The captain with a team of one navigator and one minder - in the right building, passengers - in the left. The captain gave

some of his orders in an incomprehensible maritime language. The motors did not roar, but quietly rumbled like two affectionate cats. The boat sailed away from the pier, and, quietly rattling its motors, hobbled along the waves, rolling over from one to another. They went far out to sea, and that's when the engines roared. The Tupolev creation does not cut the waves, but glides over them, cutting off the foamy ridges. Feels sick without habit. Luska wanted to throw cards with herself, but it didn't work out. The boat trembles, throws it the way we throw hot potatoes baked in a fire from palm to palm, and shakes it like a pneumatic jackhammer in the hands of miner Stakhanov. Also the roar of hells. And the smell of burnt oil is suffocating. But then the speed, I will report to you.

How many hours rushed like that, no one counted. Not before. One the thought in my head is knocking: if only all this would end, sooner.

All this ended in the middle of the night. The captain turned off the engines. The darkness is impenetrable. September is stormy in the Baltic. But today passed. It does not storm, it just shakes mercilessly. The sailor pulled a huge rubber blanket onto the wet deck, connected it to some kind of hose, unscrewed something, hissed inside the blanket, blew it apart, turning it into an inflatable boat.

The sailors are busy with the boat, the Dragon in the cockpit admonishes Lyuska: "Only the three of us know who cut the corner of the Kolyma courier. Here, Lyuska, in a rubber bag is your share. Half I weighed with golden sand, the other half I counted out for you in money: American, French, Finnish. Here is your Chinese passport. Real. Now you are going to sail on the boat to the shore. Finland is a huge country, but there are few people in it. This is the place I chose for you to land, where no one should be. If they stop you, say you lived in China. There, in Harbin, there will be Russians for the whole state. Therefore, you do not speak languages other than Russian. From China, the oceans reached Europe, through Finland she made her way to St. Petersburg to look for the treasures of her grandmother, the merchant's wife. It is better to immediately hide most of your fortune somewhere on the shore and take a good look. If

they will stop after that, you will repeat the same story, but with a different ending: you are going to look for grandma's treasures, but you haven't crossed the border yet.

"And where should I go

next?" - Wherever you want. Better go to France. There are Russians like uncut dogs. Get used to it, take a closer look at that life, then you will return here for the treasure. You have enough for a lifetime. If you don't squander everything in cards at once. So, forever, right? - And

what do you do with that kind of

money in the Soviet Union? - I don't want to go anywhere. "But with

that kind of money, they will kill you

or put you in jail. - I don't want your money! - How not needed?

You yourself said: to divide into

three ... / divided. I give you your share. You also have a real passport. I also took it out to sea - get into the boat, row to the shore. I joked. You were joking, but I don't accept such jokes. If you have such jokes, then

somewhere you

have similar thoughts. I don't need this money. I do not want to leave. - Do not rush. Get in the boat, sit and think. Time for

reflection. The captain and crew will sit in the same

building without protruding. They don't need to know what's going on. They think that we are sending a spy to Finland. Snake-eater and I in another building will play your cards, and you sit on the waves, think about your joke. If you decide to stay with us, stay. If you decide to leave with gold and money, leave. Free will. So as not to freeze - here's my jacket for you. Warm, waterproof. And you have your own gun. By the way, where did you get it from? If from a dead person, it is better to throw it into the sea, you will burn on it. I'll give you another one.

Lucy didn't say anything. She only flashed her eyes like a panther from a thicket, tore a warm jacket and a bag heavy with money and golden sand from the hands of the Dragon, climbed onto the deck, clapping loudly
hatch.

The Dragon and the Serpent-Eater remained

together. This is where the Dragon got the second rubber

bag. "This, Snake Eater, is your share. This is your Chinese passport. One more we will inflate a rubber boat for you now. Time for reflection.

"Yes, Comrade Kholovanov, who do you take me for?" To me such happiness is not needed. I am here without thinking. - Why?

- Don't know.

I don't want another fate. - Thank you,

Snake. Scatter the cards. Let's hop over. We have time to wait.

5

The game doesn't

stick. Threw the Snake

Eater deck. - Here's what, Comrade Kholovanov, I can't figure out. Why did you lead Luska into temptation? Why did he give her a passport, money, gold, why did he allow her

to run away? I believe that she will not run anywhere. And if it stays with us, then She can be trusted with any business. And any treasure.

- In vain you, sugary psychologist, started this. You offended her. She may not leave for money and a happy life in France, but simply to spite you. - Let's see. Both

listened. It seems

like a rubber boat is beating against the duralumin side of the boat. And like a wave splashing. They both looked at their watches: how long should we wait? - You tell me,

Comrade Holovanov, then explain something else. **I am** finishing the book about engineer Garin. I just can't understand anything. How is it that engineer Garin took power over the richest countries, over hundreds of millions of people, and what, did he manage without his personal intelligence?

- Yes, a good writer Lesha Tolstoy, but he just didn't understand something in matters of managing the masses. Without people like us, Garin could not rule for a single day. He would need Serpenteaters, generalist villains like you. "If Gutralin himself can't do without

people like us, then how about some Garin. - Right. And the real Serpent Eater, in my opinion, is

not the one who eats snakes, but the one who crushes the winged Serpent, the filthy Idolishe.

And again they both fell

silent. The hour dragged on for a long time. But everything eventually ends. The Dragon looked out of the hatch, whistled: there was neither an inflatable rubber boat, nor Lyuska with her treasure.

Lucy is gone. Dragon expressed himself indecently. I ordered the captain to return.

6

In the Grand Kremlin Palace, Comrade Stalin, whom some sometimes call Gtalin behind his back, has his own cinema. Armchairs are soft, leather. Five chairs in a row. Four rows. The central place in the front row is for Comrade Stalin. He once sat down in this chair, and he liked it. No one has ever encroached on this place again. Half of the seats in this room are empty during any session. Because getting into the Stalinist cinema is a great honor. Not everyone is invited here. Today we will enjoy the movie "Circus". For the eighteenth time. Comrade Stalin fell in love with this masterpiece of

Soviet cinema at first sight. With this masterpiece, he treats his dearest guests many times. This will continue until 1938, until the Volga-Volga appears, which Comrade Stalin will watch more than six hundred times over many years. This masterpiece will be created by the same Grigory Alexandrov. In the title role will be the same Lyubov Orlova. But it will be later. In the meantime, our Soviet circus shines in all its glory and splendor. And a solemn melody thunders from the screen: "I don't know another such country where a person breathes so freely ..." And further: "And no one in the world knows how to laugh and love us better."

Pure truth. We even have clowns in the arena giggling and tumble the best in the world.

Genrikh Grigoryevich Yagoda (third row, extreme left seat) pushed his neighbor, Secretary of the Central Committee Yezhov Nikolai Ivanovich: but this melody could have become the Anthem of the Soviet Union. Nikolai Ivanovich shook his head: the right idea, why not? Where else can a man breathe so freely? Comrade Stalin changed the program somewhat today.

Immediately after The Circus, a German documentary filmed in

jungles of South America. Film without translation. But everything is clear without words. The main character is a Paraguayan anaconda, about ten to twelve meters, so as not to lie. So she crawled into the village and stretched out with a black oil pipeline along the white wall of the village church. The camera zooms in on the vile reptile from its tail, slowly gliding towards its head. The disgusting body is getting fatter and fatter.

Somewhere closer to the center it is already a burning of playing muscles, which is unlikely to be grasped with both hands. Then from the middle the body gradually narrows. Here is the head, lazily dozing in the sun. And suddenly - a throw at the camera. The camera is clearly falling. On-screen frames somersault. It is not clear what became of the brave operator. But the main thing is different. Sleepy, it would seem, the anaconda suddenly, without warning, without any hint of aggression, suddenly rushes to the camera. But the audience perceives it as a throw into the hall. And everyone present recoiled at once. I think someone even screamed. Only Comrade Stalin laughs. Either he had already seen the film before and was ready for this snake throw. Maybe he has nerves

of steel. And then the anaconda bathed in the river. And fought with a crocodile. Strangled and swallowed him. There was a lot more. But here on the screen is a poisonous snake about a meter and a half or two. On her way, she meets a brindle patterned python about five meters away. And he kills her. And he swallows her. Why is it good? It's good that the snake has no legs, no wings, no horns - nothing interferes with swallowing. The boa constrictor was full and was ready to fall into a blissful hibernation with digestion, but ... then an anaconda appears. Python can't sleep. Need to be saved. But you can't get away from the anaconda! Throw - and the terrible jaws of the anaconda closed on the throat of the python. The two bodies twisted into a pulsating ball. And suddenly they both froze.

Anaconda, making sure that the python is defeated, slowly opens its jaws and begins a long gulp. Slowly, slowly, a huge python disappears into a disgusting mouth.

Holovanov did not like snakes from childhood. He has an aversion to them and some kind of unhealthy curiosity. Holovanov is sitting in the fourth row and for some reason thinks about the suitcase stolen in Yaroslavl. Why did he suddenly remember the suitcase? Oh yes! The snake-eater, he is Shirmanov. Well done. It worked masterfully. Comrade Yagoda would have known that Kholovanov, who is sitting right behind him, is the organizer and inspirer of the virtuoso kidnapping. But without Shirmanov and

distractions it would be impossible. Shirmanov is the right person, although not too cruel, ruffy and cocky. Kholovanov has long been looking for just such a villain of all trades as an assistant.

And the real snake-eater is, of course, the Paraguayan anaconda, slowly swallowing a tiger python.

7

- Comrade General Commissar of State Security, Comrade Kholovanov asks to be accepted on a very important matter. She says just for one minute.
- Call. "But now

Commissar of State Security of the third rank, Comrade Zapadny, is waiting in the waiting room, followed by Commissar of State Security of the first rank, Comrade Zakovsky.

- They'll wait. Call Holovanov.

Yagoda always treated Holovanov's visits with great attention. Yagoda remembered even in his sleep, even in his delirium: this was Stalin's man. If Holovanov says something, it can be not only his own words, but also the words of Gtulin himself. And Gtulin has to be reckoned with. — Hello, comrade Holovanov.

Hello, comrade Yagoda. - What will please you, comrade Kholovanov?

"Comrade Yagoda, I need your help. We'll help as much as we can. I'm listening. - On the orders of Comrade Stalin, I am

searching for treasures accumulated by the bourgeoisie and other exploiting classes, but hidden from the worker-peasant power. We desperately need money, gold, semi-precious stones for the needs of industrialization. — And how is the work progressing, comrade Kholovanov? -

Progressing successfully. But something unusual and disturbing happened today. — And what was it? "Anonymous called me and told me about a curious method of

concealment. It turns out that the cunning people are stacking gold in the coffins of famous people.

people and solemnly bury him. "But
you can't go to an ordinary grave?" -

Can. But better in the boss. Who dares to dig up the big man's
grave? They are in protected cemeteries! The unfinished enemies of the
proletariat of all stripes hope that our native worker-peasant power will
someday collapse, and after that they will unearth their treasures. And
until that moment, gold and pebbles are safely hidden from searches
and confiscations. - Very interesting. - It's a hint.

Recently, we all
buried our beloved commander of the second rank, Bucetis, who
untimely left us. Anonymous reported that in his coffin unknown persons
hid almost thirty kilograms of golden sand. Comrade Yagoda, the
People's Commissar of Internal Affairs,
the General Commissar of State Security, did not feel well at all.
"And... what can I serve?" — How than? Heinrich Grigoryevich, the
grave

must be opened. - Open
it. - Heinrich Grigoryevich! Are you joking. Like this?
Without the
permission of the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of the
USSR? - I allow it. - Heinrich Grigoryevich,
let's go
together. Assign a commission, put up a cordon, cover the grave
with canvas walls. And we will dig. Iron Heinrich doesn't like it very much
that this

rogue Kholovanov calls him either by his first name or by his last
name. I would like it to be by rank and position. But Heinrich likes that a
man from Gutalin came to him to ask permission. At the same time, cats
scratch their souls: are these the same kilograms of golden sand? No,
no and NO! The suitcase with golden sand was gone a week ago, and
the commander was buried earlier. What is behind all this?

Chapter 1 1

1

A piece of the Novodevichy cemetery was cordoned off by cheerful guys in gray raincoats and caps on one side. It was also fashionable then to wear Tajik and Turkmen skullcaps. Friendship of Peoples! Maxim Gorky himself, the great proletarian writer, in this way demonstrated his love for the peoples of Central Asia. This fashion lasted right up to the beginning of the space age. So - who is in a Turkmen skullcap, who is in a cap, and who is in a hat. But the approaches to that part of the cemetery are securely blocked. Tarpaulins were stretched around the grave, and a tent was also set up nearby to open the coffin.

They dug up quickly. The earth is fresh. They took out the coffin, dragged it into the tent. Now - shoo all outsiders! No one is supposed to know what's going on here. There are only five people in the tent: Yagoda with his faithful secretary, Senior Major of the State Security Pavel Petrovich Bulanov, Holovanov and two especially trusted executioners from Butyrka prison. They open the coffin, turn the dead. The bookkeeper, who was ready to receive the treasures, was not allowed inside yet. As soon as the gold shines, then please.

The performer, using a crowbar, just like the way thieves-skokari tear locks from doors, gently squeezed the coffin lid without breaking the edges. They took it off together, put it aside. If you do not know that something is hidden under the dead man, then you will not pay attention to his somewhat elevated position. Well, if you know, then it's time to whistle: indeed there is something under it!

Performers in rubber gloves and aprons. In those in which sentences are carried out. By the shoulders and legs they pulled out the military commander of the Civil War, who covered himself with unfading glory by suppressing peasant riots, mass executions of hostages and flogging pregnant women with ramrods.

Who would know how cool the commander was lucky to die in 1936. The next day he would have to die in different conditions, and on

there was no need to count on a luxurious grave. But he
skipped. The coffin is carved and decorated, the bottom inside is lined with
red calico. They tore off the kumach, took out the boards. And there is not gold at
all, but the second dead man. Naked. They took him out too. The expected
treasure was not found. He scratched the
back of his head: "What could
all this mean?"

2

"Comrade Kholovanov, Luska revealed to us the place where the messenger
from the Kolyma is buried. And why the hell did you hand
over your place to Yagoda? "I, the Snake-Eater, removed suspicion from
myself and from all of us. Now Yagoda knows for sure that we have nothing to do
with this case. Now he will look for enemies anywhere, but not among us. Thank
you Lucy for pointing out the location. Sorry, she's gone. From such material it
would be possible to extrude a noble fighter of the secret front.

3

With whom should the General Commissar of State Security advise on this
matter? Only with a faithful squire, comrade Bulanov. So what does all this mean?
Gutalin sniffed out our
affairs, caught and killed the courier, buried it, and now he showed us the
place, hinting that he knows everything?

- Of course not. If Gutalin or his men intercepted our courier, then why kill
him? He must be kept alive as the most important witness. - Maybe this is
Holovanov on his own
initiative? - And why should he? If he intercepted the messenger, if
he organized the abduction of cargo in Yaroslavl, then it is still beneficial for
him to keep the courier alive. No, it's definitely not him. - Someone coolly digs
under us, but who - I don't understand. So,
someone intercepted the courier, killed him, packed him in a double-bottomed
coffin, and then

suddenly called Holovanov: look for treasures in the coffin. Stop! Why don't we deal with the issue of the coffin. Where did this coffin come from?

- I have dealt with this issue. A very good coffin at a very good price was offered to the funeral commission by a representative of some coffin artel. After clarification, it turned out that this representative was none other than a bandit nicknamed Shaitan, who had long been wanted by the Criminal Investigation Department.

- We wish we had

him ... - The criminal investigation department found Shaitan killed by a shot in the forehead from a pistol. Along with him was the corpse of another murdered bandit named

Arkashka-

Khlyust. - What a pity. — That's not all. Both were killed with a Browning FN1910 pistol. Caliber seven sixty-five. It was from such a pistol that the first shot of the World War was fired, when Gavrilo Princip killed Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo. But our courier had just such a pistol. - What happens? It turns

out a vicious circle. Our courier from his Browning killed two bandits, then they ordered him a coffin with a double bottom. Or they buried him in a coffin with a double bottom, and then he killed them. What nonsense!

4

September 1936. Children go to school. Stalin is on vacation.

All year Stalin worked hard. The summer has been quite difficult. A lot has been done. Including, and not least, a show trial was held. Conducted brilliantly. Zinoviev, Kamenev, Smirnov and their entire gang have been exposed before the country and the world. They suffered a severe but well-deserved punishment. The process was costly to carry out. Not everyone, oh, not everyone in the Central Committee understands the need for drastic measures. That's why it's dumb resistance. Next in line is a new process, a new group of leaders who turned out to be enemies, spies, pests. But before bringing the enemies to justice, it is necessary to achieve full support in the Central Committee. And the Central Committee is self-willed

boyars around the good king, this is a pack of dogs. If they feel threatened, they will kill the leader. A new fierce battle is coming. In autumn or early winter, a plenum of the Central Committee should be held. The problem is that if a dozen central boyars unite their power, then this will be enough to throw the General Secretary of the Central Committee from his high post. They can do this right at the plenum. And so that the thrown Secretary General does not take it into his head to kick, you can immediately tie him up ...

That is why the General Secretary of the Central Committee, Comrade Stalin, needs a vacation. Right now. Before the decisive clashes of autumn and winter, before the coming year of 1937. The doctors insisted that the pressure jumps. Need to rest. Because Stalin goes to Yalta. The railway station for

leading comrades is separate. From the Kursk railway station, the branch goes to the side, to the depot. But this is only smoked outside the depot. And inside it is not a depot at all, but a special station. Inside, everything glitters and sparkles. The architect Iofan did his best. He invested his soul and people's money. It's not a pity for the leaders.

The Stalinist train has been ready since morning at the only platform. There is a very small group of mourners here: Stalin's secretary Comrade Poskrebyshev, the country's chief railway worker, the People's Commissar for Communications, Politburo member Comrade Kaganovich, People's Commissar of Internal Affairs Commissar General of State Security Comrade Yagoda, Secretary of the Central Committee Yezhov Nikolai Ivanovich, Comrade Kholovanov, whose position no one has ever heard aloud called some other comrades.

Stalin never went on vacation alone. Every year it is a great honor for one of the members of the Politburo to have a rest together with Comrade Stalin. Comrade Zhdanov was honored this year. Stalin

and Zhdanov have not yet arrived. In a group of people seeing off, they talk about the weather and about the last match between Dynamo and Spartak. Holovanov smiled at Iron Heinrich, nodded his head, they say, let's step aside. Moved away. - Heinrich

Grigoryevich ... The

inflexible Heinrich was always infuriated by the Holovanovsky manner of calling him by his first name and patronymic. It is said after all: General Commissar of State Security! Isn't it clear? Everyone has already figured out

except for this shit. Even Gutalin of Iron Heinrich calls the General Commissar. — Genrikh

Grigoryevich, the country is flourishing, the country is straightening its shoulders, the country is creating and

building. "You have rightly noted that, Comrade Kholovanov. - And in the eyes of a cunning with a slight mockery.

Because the country needs gold. in commercial quantities.

Like Heinrich's sledgehammer hit the liver. Almost overturned at such words. Barely resisted. He even chuckled.

"You are also very right in saying this, Comrade Kholovanov. -

Business offer. Why don't we pick Comrade Sverdlov's safe? It has been closed since 1919.

What does this have to do with gold?

"What if there's treasure in that safe?" We will open it and give it to the needs of

industrialization! — Tried.

Does not exceed. - Let's try again. I challenge the NKVD to socialist competition. Submit a team! And I am mine. We will discuss the terms of the fight. We will appoint Comrade Yezhov as a judge. Comrade Yezhov, Nikolai Ivanovich, may I have a moment with you? Comrade Yagoda and I consulted here and decided ... A Stalinist limousine drove under

the arches here. The attendants revived. Stalin gives Poskrebyshev final instructions. Then Heinrich the Iron called. They whispered something to him. The next one is Comrade Yezhov. Finally - Holovanov. The Dragon was about to wish Comrade Stalin a happy

journey and a good rest, but suddenly, quietly, so that no one else could hear, he blurted out something that he did not expect from himself:

"Maybe cancel the vacation in the south. We are

organizing here in Moscow. We have both a lake and boats... Stalin measured Holovanov not with the

glance of a king cobra ready to throw, but with the indifferent gaze of an anaconda. There is no expression at all in the unblinking eyes. "Why is that, Comrade Holovanov?" - Premonition, Comrade

Stalin. - Do not worry. Everything will be fine. Do you have something to tell me?

Before the eyes of Holovanov stood "Khabarovsk - Moscow" in the glorious city of Yaroslavl. He sighed heavily, straightened his belt and quietly answered:

- There is nothing important. Have a good journey, Comrade Stalin.

5

Here you are building a palace for yourself. How would you use the plinth? These are huge rooms behind very thick and strong walls under indestructible vaults. First of all, it is the last line of

defense in case of a coup. The basement windows are small, slightly above the ground. Protected by thick bars. These are embrasures. Corner and some other premises must be prepared for defense already at the design stage: platforms should be built near the windows for the convenience of shooters, the windows themselves should be covered with steel shields, leaving only slots for shooting and observation. Shields, of course, should not be flaunted, covered with something or made removable. Store weapons and ammunition in these premises. Right next to it are living quarters for guards. And servants somewhere nearby.

In addition, the basement is wine cellars and food warehouses: beer and wine barrels, shelves of dusty bottles, hams, sausages, cheeses, salt, flour, soaked apples in barrels, cabbage, peas. Treasures are well kept in these cellars. Nastya

examined her dwelling, and bent one more finger:

there may be a prison here. And even a chamber for torture and murder. She scared that thought away, not allowing it to nestle. Of course, there must be wells for supplying water. Somewhere there

must be hiding places in which, in case of failure, one could hide and sit out, and secret underground passages. Yes! Underground passages to other buildings and fortifications, secret passages for salvation, as well as for peeping and eavesdropping. How else? The Grand Kremlin Palace was erected by the great builder and fortifier Nicholas I. The people called him Nikolai Palkin. I really liked the discipline. Soldier for the slightest slips through

the system drove. He disliked the death penalty. He hanged five scoundrels-Decembrists, and on that he calmed down. But through the system is another matter. Through the ranks, please. Through the system - it's at least every day. He will build two lines of a hundred soldiers, each with a stick in his hand, guilty of drumming on a rope between the lines is pulled. And every soldier must hit his yesterday's comrade once. It is also upbringing: so that not strangers, but their own flogged. And whoever hits weakly will be dragged through the ranks. Two hundred sticks is the sovereign's norm. Two hundred is almost death. And three hundred - the coffin is guaranteed to anyone. Although the death penalty was not considered.

So who is he, Nikolai Palkin? He is the third son of Paul the First. He could never count on the throne. The eldest son Alexander and his descendants were to rule, and in the event that this line of inheritance turns out to be a dead end, then the second son, Constantine, was to rule. But fate turned out so that in December 1825, the third son Nikolai had to take power by force. And he took it, shooting with buckshot from cannons a rebellion of a gang of conspirators. Should he, Nikolai Palkin, not be afraid of conspiracies? Should he not take measures against palace coups? The history of his family is all woven from conspiracies. Nikolai Palkin's father, Pavel the First, was strangled in his own bedroom with a silver officer's scarf. Nikolai Palkin's grandfather, Peter the Third, was overthrown by the conspirators and killed. And before that, the change of power went along the same slippery paths. The daughter of Peter the Great, Elizabeth Petrovna, carried out a palace coup by the force of one grenadier company of the Life Guards of the Preobrazhensky Regiment. She later transformed this company into the Life Campaign. Yes, and Peter the Great himself went to power through great bloodshed and executions by archers. But even before him - rebellions and riots, impostors on the throne, overt and covert murders. And who is the conspirator? Their own. Paul I was strangled with the approval of his eldest son Alexander, heir to the throne. Peter III was overthrown by his wife

and killed by her lover. Peter the Great ousted his sister from the throne. Could Nikolai Palkin, remembering all this, build the Grand Kremlin Palace without foreseeing the opportunity to peep and eavesdrop

on what the people closest to him are talking about? Could not. But how can you c

6

The girl who was arrested in Konotop fell asleep without finding an answer to her question. She dreamed of the

Life Campaign ... As a child, Nastya Streletskaya became addicted to the eighteen green volumes of the Military Encyclopedia. The tenth volume, published in 1912, began with the article "Elizaveta Petrovna". And in the fourteenth volume, which came out in 1914, there was an article about the Life campaign. The publication of the Military Encyclopedia was interrupted by the World War. The eighteenth volume was interrupted by an article about Port Arthur.

She dreamed of the battleships of Port Arthur, and then again and again - the Life

Campaign ... She was attracted by the fate of the autocrats. Especially female. Those who took power themselves, without

asking anyone ... On November 25, 1741, Elizabeth, the daughter of Peter the Great, raising the grenadier company of the Life Guards of the Preobrazhensky Regiment, made a palace coup and ascended the throne. On December 31, this company received the name of the Life Campaign. There were 364 people in the company. All five officers were promoted to generals, an ensign to a colonel, non-commissioned officers to lieutenant colonels, three hundred ordinary grenadiers became officers, non-nobles received hereditary nobility, estates, hundreds of serf souls, all the money was given out to nothing ... And Elizaveta Petrovna became empress.

7

"Sey Seich, your second flight to a very tricky place. Drivers know where to go. I have ordered that an important prisoner be handed over to you. Deliver here. Look, don't miss it. Run away - I'll turn my head. In which case, kill, but do not release.

- Understood. Is this the one who will smoke Sverdlov's safe? - Yes. This is the famous Sevastyan the bear cub. He has been in prison for many years.

"And if he doesn't want to open the safe?" -
I'll take it on my own.

Chapter 12

1

Sevastyan-bear cub Sey Seich received on receipt. For the transportation of passengers of this caliber in a special train, a special compartment: the floor, ceiling and three walls, like wallpaper, are covered with steel sheet, all the seams were welded by the best craftsmen of Comrade Paton's Electric Welding Institute. The best tank armor in the world is welded using the Paton method. So, the Paton seam is stronger than the armor itself. The fourth wall is steel grating. Inside the compartment there are two shelves, a washbasin and

something like a toilet. Sey Seich warned the prisoner that attempts to escape from the cage would not be ignored. Then he added that by position and vocation he was not and would not be a guard. He put the table right next to the grate, covered it, as is customary in the best houses. So they went all the way to Moscow on both sides of the table, separated by bars.

If people understand each other, then the bars are not an obstacle to friendly conversation, energetic drinking and thoughtful snacking. Fortunately, there was something to drink and eat on the special train. But this was not abused. Both knew the measure.

2

There are two in Yagoda's Kremlin office. He himself and his faithful secretary, Senior Major of the State Security Bulanov Pavel Petrovich.

"Someone is

digging under us. Who - I do not understand. To know who would have broken off the horns. What about the suitcase?

- Are looking for. No trace. -

I think Serpent Eater should be involved in this case. The boy is sharp and smart. He worked on the platform of the Northern Station for three years, maybe he will tell us how this suitcase could disappear.

- Understood. Tomorrow I will puzzle him.

- It's good that Gulin went on vacation. The scandal will not flare up before his arrival. And when he arrives, he will convene a plenum of the Central Committee. It is now desperately important for him to secure a majority at the plenum ...

- Many are against it. Not open. Our system is stupid: each individually is against it, but all together are for it. But again, everyone will vote for Gulin.

Let them vote. We should take tighter control over communication systems. The rest will follow. The main thing is not who votes how, but who will guard the plenum ... And they both laughed.

3

She woke up suddenly. Deep night. But she didn't seem to sleep very long. She woke up because she suddenly realized in a dream how Nikolai Palkin set up an eavesdropping system. Everything is simple. Just stupid. The front floor is the first. This is to avoid climbing stairs. On the main floor are the royal chambers, here are the people closest to the king, here are his most important guests. And he, only he, decides who should live in what chambers! And under the first floor - basement! And in the basement - ventilation! There were no fans back then. Ventilation is not forced, but natural. The king himself and invented, approved by his hand! Here Nastya Streletskaya was imprisoned in the room, the windows and doors were tightly locked, and the air is clean, fresh from the vent under the ceiling, the wind blows. Why? Because the pipes are brought high above the roof, this pressure difference is created and circulation is created.

Pipes from the basement rooms go up through the massive walls of the royal chambers ... If they are laid wisely, if acoustics are taken into account, if they are not hidden in the very depths of the brickwork, given the experience of previous centuries, then ... then you can listen to what is happening from the basement rooms in the rooms above them.

Further - a matter of technology: in such and such wine cellars, in such and such arsenals, there should not be strangers. From your bedroom come down

secret ladder, wander around the basement, go into the right rooms, listen whoever you want.

Here is an outlet above Nastya. And below is a ledge in the wall, on which you can stand. Nicholas obviously had a ladder. Too bad she doesn't have stairs. But the protrusion here is not in vain. The ledge

is smartly embedded. One problem for the creator of the system: no matter how someone else accidentally heard conversations in the royal chambers, but the system would not be discovered. For this, there must be some kind of

simple, but reliable sound insulation. Nastya climbed onto the ledge, stuck her hand into the vent, rummaged around, felt for some kind of wooden block, pushed it with her very fingertips. Suddenly, the deck smoothly moved aside. And Nastya clearly

distinguished voices. - Our system is stupid, each individually is against it, and all together are for it. But again, everyone will vote for

Gutalin. Let them vote. We should take tighter control over communication systems. And the rest will follow. The main thing is not who votes how, but who will guard the plenum ... And they both laughed.

4

The Snake-eater liked the cabin even before the captain opened the door to its full extent. The captain only slightly opened the door, and the Snake-Eater immediately took in everything with his eyes, appreciated everything. Quite a small cabin, but so comfortable that words can not express. A soft leather sofa, a folding sleeping shelf above it, a built-in wardrobe, a shelf with books, a table, a round porthole. And here is the

Snake Eater alone. Moon in the porthole. Water overboard splashes, cradles. It's time to sleep. But the Serpent does not sleep. Holovanov recommended not to go to work in Lefortovo anymore. There is nothing to do there, he says. He promised another job, even more interesting. And what could be more interesting than the work of the executioner of sentences? Or even an assistant performer? And how is it not to go to

work? After all, we have a snake-eater for a reason, he is in our service in the GUGB of the NKVD of the USSR. If the service is not

walk, then they will miss, they will start looking. True, the Snake Eater is well settled. Everyone in the group of executioners knows that he is Yagoda's man, that he is carrying out some special assignment, and therefore he can show up in Lefortovo whenever he wants. But everything has a limit. You can't stay away for too long. Yes, and Yagoda himself can ask: what are you doing there, brother, and where is the result?

Now, if Kholovanov somehow fired Zmeeed from the NKVD and applied for another position, then, please, then he would not work in Lefortovo ... But they would put him on the wanted list. No, sometimes you have to be there. Tomorrow morning. Yes, and it's a favorite thing. How without it?

5

Iron Heinrich hardly slept that night either. He completed the last meeting in the former office of Sverdlov at about two in the morning. Then he exchanged a couple of phrases with his secretary Budanov, and after that he rushed through Moscow at night to Kommunarka.

But I couldn't sleep for a

long time. Damn Holovan! I decided to open Sverdlov's safe! He only pretends to be looking for gold! He, the creeping bastard, needs Sverdlov's documents! And there, after all, something may turn up on Yagoda. Kholovan wants to deal with the attempt on Lenin's life. He digs under the Iron Heinrich! And as a judge, the vile dwarf Kolka Yezhov called.

Iron Heinrich, as soon as he heard that Holovan decided to open the safe, sent his best masters to screw that safe. It is necessary to get ahead of Holovan! Clean out everything in the safe. And leave all the rubbish. But for a day now, his guys have been twisting the keyhole with all possible tools, but they can't do a damn thing. Until twelve days before the start of the competition, there is still time, maybe it will work out. Ah, if only it could!

6

Nastya woke up early in the morning from the roar of the bolt. She slept without undressing. The air here is clean, but too cold in the morning. A light summer blanket does not help. And she did not undress in order to be ready for any surprise. The door clanged. A man

in the form of the NKGB entered, but for some reason without insignia on his buttonholes, in round glasses like a bicycle. The visitor did not introduce himself. Nastya is sitting on her bed. The newcomer nestled on a stool screwed to the floor.

Their conversation did not last long, and obviously annoyed the newcomer. This was not a conversation at all, but an interrogation. The security officer who entered Nastya politely called Anastasia Andreevna. Before entering, he obviously read her biography. He undoubtedly understood that on August 23, 1936, at 15:10, Anastasia Andreevna Streletskaya was not and could not be on the first platform of the Northern Station in Moscow. The snake-eater recognized himself. The bespectacled man came only to make sure that everything was exactly that way, and very badly: they caught and locked up the wrong one

at all, which was required. And she realized that the newcomer was not in the best mood, and this mood worsened in the course of a short conversation.

And then she decided to show him how to conduct an interrogation. "Look into my eyes. And answer whatever you want. He obeyed, not knowing why. — I will determine your year of birth. It was 1890. You can answer yes, no, don't know. Your answers don't matter. So, 90th?

- Don't know. — Was it the 91st? - Rather yes than no. - You don't have to deceive me. You were born in 1895.

Month

of January? -

Yes. January.

- February? -

Yes.

February. -

March? -

Yes. March. - April? - Yes. April.

- Lie. You were born in February. Set a date? "No, no," the man with glasses suddenly became worried. Collected papers and disappeared behind the door with a rattling bolt.

Nastya knew with some animal knowledge that now she could not show weakness. The weak are beaten. She must express strength. But how? Only like this, demonstrating that she would still outplay the bespectacled man, no matter what he was up to.

7

Early morning. September. Slush. Cold. Do not stop the yawn. The snake-eater at the Lefortovo checkpoint presented an expanded pass, passed one more control post and another. Before pushing the door to his department with his foot, he repeated a humorous phrase, prepared in advance, to himself: "Have you guys probably forgotten who I am?"

He opened the door and found himself in front of the senior major State Security Bulanov Pavel Petrovich. - I'm waiting for you, let's go. Where they went, why they went,

Bulanov did not explain. And we went straight to Kommunarka.

Comrade Yagoda, General Commissar

of State Security, has a huge office in the central building of the NKVD on Lubyanka. And he also has offices in the Lefortovo prison, in Butyrka and on Taganka. Most of all, he likes to receive reports in the royal office of the Grand Kremlin Palace, in which Comrade Sverdlov once worked, under which Comrade Sverdlov arranged a personal prison. Comrade Sverdlov held personal prisoners in that prison. Among them is Fanny Kaplan. From that prison, the prisoners were taken out only to one place - to the Kremlin garage. To the noise of the engine ...

But when it comes to the most important issues, Comrade Yagoda holds meetings at his dacha in Kommunarka. It's beautiful here. The Moscow region is generally famous for its beauty. I personally would build a log cabin in Pushkino for myself. This, you know, along the Yaroslavl road. Remember Mayakovsky:

The hillock of Pushkino was hunched
over by Shark Mountain ...

So there, in Pushkino. But Kommunarka would also fit. Nature, you know, a river, reeds, birch groves, tits jump, bunnies, frogs sing in the reeds in the evenings, mountain ash ripens.

Behind the high green fences on a hillock rises Yagoda's estate. At control posts, honorary service is performed by glorious fellows from a special company, each fighter of which Genrikh Grigorievich personally selected. The paths are lined

with white sand. In the flower beds there are foreign-style flowers. The car stopped near the porch. The sentry does not even ask Comrade Bulanov for a pass. He is his own person here. He doesn't ask the Serpent Eater either: if he's with Comrade Bulanov, then everything is in order here. We went through the corridor, turned - a large room like a reception room. Three Chekists are waiting. Here the Serpent-eater's heart skipped a beat. Holovanov said: don't

go there anymore! Comrade Bulanov knocked on the door and, without waiting for an answer, let the Snake-

Eater into the boss's office. And the captain of the State Security, Mikhail Borisovich Davydov, senior in the group of couriers, blossomed with a poppy

color: we live, guys! They did not understand why joy, if all three did not escape the terrible

punishment for the loss of cargo. - Why don't

you rejoice! - Why all of a sudden? - Yes, from the fact that our suitcase did not d
It was Comrade Yagoda who gave us a test of vigilance! -

What are you going

to eat? - Didn't you recognize him? Yes, this young man in uniform that went into the office with Comrade Bulanov - this is the same one! Belted with a rope!

Chapter 13

1

The snake has disappeared. Kholovanov was waiting for him for breakfast. Not wait. I went to wake up. Empty cabin. The bed is neatly made. Holovanov to the captain: where? The captain scratches his head in search of an answer. He apologizes: it seems that the watch was

vigilantly carried all night. OK. Then we'll figure it out! And now to meet Seich. He had already reported that he had arrived, that he had delivered the prisoner Sevastyan the bear cub, was waiting on the twelfth siding of the Moscow-Sortirovochnaya

station in his new train. Kholovanov rushed there. Accepted the prisoner, brought somewhere led through dark corridors.

- Sevastyan Ivanovich, as I know, you love Chekists, but you don't
Very.

"Not really," Sebastian confirmed. - So they
announced that the best bear cubs work in the NKVD. — Where are they? - They boast
that in five

minutes they will
open the safe, which has been locked since 1919. - What's the safe? - Very big, British.
Bromley. "They won't take
Bromley in five minutes.
- What about ten? "Three hours is not enough for
them. And ten. If Bromley is two-ton,

no one will take it. No wonder it has been locked since the nineteenth year. "And
you, Sevastyan Ivanovich, would you shake the olden days?" - On
people? - On
people. - I would
shake it. If the tool is. - Vodka for you and those
who are sitting with you, ladies, cheese, sausages. I will feed a year for slaughter. "I don't
need your favors, citizen
Kholovanov. Eat yourself.

- If you run, I'll kill you. - I know.

"And you need to change your appearance so that they don't recognize you; You are my secret prisoner. -

Change. - Do you know where we

are? - Don't know. We are at the Bolshoi Theatre. Hey man! Come in. And make it so this gentleman was not ashamed to appear in the House of Lords.

2

- You pointed out the wrong girl to me, Zmееed.

He himself knows that he is not. To hell with her, girl. How to get rid of those three that are waiting in the waiting room? How would you turn your back to the wall so that they

don't recognize you? The heart is pounding like a caught bunny. Iron Heinrich is interpreting something. The snake-eater does not hear that. He just caught himself, listened, agreed, portrayed confusion: ay-yai-yai, but how could it be wrong? And so similar. And the palms are sweaty, and the ears are burning, and the little snake-eater's

heart will jump out of his chest. Yagoda knew, and you know it, that shouting will not help the cause. But it is not always possible to hold back the cry. I know for myself. And Yagoda always succeeded. Iron Heinrich understands that the man made a mistake. Maybe I was wrong. On the other hand, how could a scout-observer make such a mistake? How could he name the daughter of commander Streletsky?

"So, Snake-Eater, are we going to do it?" Search? Again, all the photos of juvenile rogues you collect? Has the face been erased from memory yet? "No, Genrikh

Grigoryevich, I'll try my best. - I'll give you more work. I

have comrades in the waiting room waiting. Their suitcase was stolen. The matter is small. There were all sorts of rags in it. But there were memorabilia for the museum of KGB glory. They brought the guys from the Far East, but they missed it in Yaroslavl. Can you help me find it? - I'll help you, how?

Comrade Bulanov, meanwhile, slipped out into the waiting room, quietly shutting the door, and explained to the unfortunate couriers that a new comrade was joining their group, who would help solve the crime. Here,

looking at the ground, the head of the group of couriers, captain of the State Security, Mikhail Borisovich Davydov, smiled, and quietly told Comrade Bulanov that they, the couriers, were aware that they were to blame, that, of course, they had not passed the vigilance test, but next time they would serve bear with triple vigilance.

Comrade Bulanov did not understand anything. And then the head of the group of couriers explained that he had now recognized this dashing, slender Chekist, who, on the orders of comrades Yagoda and Bulanov, in Yaroslavl, grabbed their suitcase. -

Whom did you recognize? "Yes, the one you appointed to our group, the one who is now talking with Comrade Yagoda. Obviously they are there, in the office now. they make fun of us.

3

Nastya deceived Bulanov. She was not at all a master at conducting interrogations and determining by the expression of her eyes whether a person is telling the truth or lying. She just had a good memory. Soon, right on the eve of the coming 1937, the Eighth All-Union Congress of Soviets will open in Moscow, which will adopt the new, most democratic Stalinist Constitution in the world. The best people of the country will gather in the Grand Kremlin Palace. There will be 1286 of them. A book with photographs and short biographies of people's deputies, who are destined to evaluate and accept the Constitution as the main and inviolable law of the Motherland of all the working people of the world, has already been published. Most recently, this book fell into Nastya's hands, she read it. And once you read it, you remember it. And it turned out that there is no superfluous knowledge. She immediately recognized the bespectacled security officer who entered: his portrait was on page 66. There was no doubt: this was a deputy of the upcoming Eighth All-Union Congress of Soviets, Comrade Pavel Petrovich Bulanov. She remembered everything that was said about him on that 66th page. The biography began from the day of birth - February 12, 1895

of the year. If he hadn't been frightened and hadn't run away, then she, looking into his eyes, would have "established" both the place of his birth, and the main milestones of his biography, and the Chekist title, and his position - Secretary of the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of the USSR.

She had to show: take me seriously, senior major State Security. You don't have to joke with me.

And she showed.

And he

understood. It also seemed to her that his voice was one of the voices that she overheard at night.

But this was not certain.

4

By twelve o'clock the cursed safe had been dragged out of the Kremlin warehouse into a large empty hall that had once served as a practice area for swordsmen. Nikolai Ivanovich Yezhov, even before the start of the duel of bear-masters, arranged in a businesslike manner: he put up powerful guards around the entire building, organized a state commission to receive valuables. If you can't open it, no big deal. And if it succeeds, everything is ready for the reception.

Iron Heinrich realized late: I have a special company from selected fellows for protection!

"Nothing," replied Comrade Yezhov. - The Red Army soldiers from the First Moscow Proletarian Rifle Division are also not bast shields.

Genrikh Grigoryevich Yagoda presented his team to Judge Comrade Yezhov - five NKVD masters. Holovanov's team is a foreigner with a red beard overgrown to the very eyes in a bourgeois hat, in black gloves, with a white silk scarf around his neck. Before the performance,

the captain of the NKVD team showed Iron Heinrich with a glance: they had been trying all night, and before that all day yesterday. He even threw up his hands a little: if they gave him a week, maybe we would...

Iron Heinrich sighed, cursing himself once again: how could a year, two, five years ago he didn't bother to pick this safe! And if you open

it was impossible, so it was necessary to take it into a swampy swamp, but in a quagmire and drown it. But the devil knows what will be inside! Comrade Sverdlov could keep documents of the highest degree of secrecy, which he should never have shown to anyone.

The referee of the fight announced the conditions: five minutes for one team, then five minutes for the other. Then in turn - ten minutes, twenty, thirty, one hour, two, four. Further - on the rise. Sea prize - roasted pig in apples. Lot order.

Yezhov Nikolai Ivanovich threw a coin, it clinked on the granite floor. He slapped her with his palm to stop her from jumping and jumping. He raised his palm: it turned out - a proletarian with a hammer, the NKVD team to start. Nikolai Ivanovich clicked the Swiss stopwatch: the time has come! The foreigner, meanwhile,

demanded an armchair and Pol Roger champagne. "Half-faces" in our opinion. This is the favorite drink of the First Lord of the Admiralty, Sir Churchill, whom we mistakenly call Churchill. He pours a footman, the drink foams, in an effervescent cascade over the edge. A foreign guest took the bottle from his hands, without a word showed how to pour it. The edge of the bottle should touch the edge of the glass. That's all. The foam will never overflow, you cudgel. And dressed up in a livery. The Chekists worked for five minutes, giving way to a foreign guest.

But with a decisive gesture, he makes it clear that he is missing his exit. Yezhov explains to Kholovanov that if the first team now opens the safe on their second approach, then the competition will stop, the foreigner will lose. But the visiting infidel with a royal wave portrayed that he understands everything without translation and does not change his decision, he has nothing to worry about - this is a two-ton Bromley, let the rivals tinker. Iron Genrikh Bulanov through his eyes: do not miss the moment, you need to remove the foreigner's fingers, we'll figure out

later who he is. But the foreigner does not take off his gloves. After ten minutes, he repeated the gesture, as after the first five

minutes: work, masters, I will admire you. The NKVD team worked for five minutes, an additional ten and another twenty. Who would have known that before

that they fought with him for twenty-eight hours without sleep and rest, changing each other ...

Did you guys work? Rest. Now is our time! The foreigner threw off a black cape from his shoulders - in such French azhans they keep order in Paris - casually moved a crystal glass to the side, as if a tablecloth-self-assembly spread a rectangular piece of burgundy leather, laid out a sparkling instrument on it and began. He acted more like not a magician, but like a doctor, listening through a wooden tube to the inner rustles of the iron door, as if to the beating of a human heart. I won't say that the foreigner opened it right

away. It was a long and tedious job. After working twenty minutes, gave way to rivals. He no longer drank champagne. He calculated something in a school notebook, biting the tip of a pencil. And when they gave him a new thirty-minute approach, he felt something at the twenty-fourth minute. Moved away from the safe. Looked at it from the side. Then he resolutely returned to him, for some reason hugged him, pressed his forehead against him, patted him as we pat an old comrade on the shoulder, and suddenly turned the thing that served him as a key. There was a click in the safe, he turned the handle, slightly opened the door of monstrous thickness and equally monstrous weight, and, without looking inside, went to his chair. The Russian people have always respected skill, prowess

and strength. Even if it is the strength and skill of the infidel enemy. The captain of the NKVD team approached the stranger, shook his hand in a black glove, bowed his head: I recognize you, master.

5

Iron Heinrich fell into a streak of bad luck. But today passed. There were no documents in Sverdlov's safe that would shed light on the heroic past of Henry. There is only gold, money and passports in case Comrade Sverdlov and his inner circle flee from the capital of our great Motherland and the entire world proletariat. Heinrich was very afraid that the passport would turn out to be in his name. But it passed again.

A lot of gold in the safe, a lot of money. Only gold and platinum rings, earrings, rings, chains, brooches, bracelets,

pendants, necklaces, cigarette cases, orders, watches, icons, caskets, snuff boxes with large diamonds, rubies, sapphires, emeralds seven hundred pieces. More precisely, seven hundred and five. The work is amazing. It would seem - one hundred or two hundred grams of gold or platinum and two dozen large diamonds, well, what is the price of that little thing? And here, not diamonds, not rubies and not gold are valued, but the work of masters. Each sparkling trinket bears the mark of either Osipov, or Khlebnikov, or the Grachev brothers, or Faberge, or Ovchinnikov. Sell one of these things in Paris and buy a villa on the Cote d'Azur.

And there's brand new money in packs of crispy ones. Five hundred rubles with Peter the Great, one hundred rubles with Catherine the Great, fifty rubles with Nikolai Palkin, quarter notes with Alexander III. Only 749 thousand rubles. The empire collapsed, but its paper money was so valuable that foreign banks accepted it at face value and even exchanged it for gold until the early twenties. And in the homeland of the world proletariat, they did not lose prices and were in circulation until 1922. 749 thousand is a lot. True, now they are worth nothing. But there is something here

that does not lose value - gold coins: five rubles, ten, fifteen ... Nikolai Ivanovich Yezhov is surprised: what a stupid coin - 7 rubles 50 kopecks. Iron Heinrich explains with understanding: Alexander III had gold coins in denominations of five rubles and ten. The first weighed 6.45 grams, the second - 12.9. And Nicholas II reduced the gold content in the ruble by one and a half times. On coins weighing 12.9 grams, they began to write not "ten rubles", but "fifteen". Accordingly, a coin weighing 6.45 grams was not five rubles, but one and a half times more - 7 rubles 50 kopecks. In addition, Nicholas II printed his five-ruble notes weighing 4.31 grams and gold coins weighing 8.62 grams.

Holovanov is surprised and swears to himself: a fucking jeweler, a pharmacist, damn it! And he himself squints at his foreigner: he would not break loose, taking advantage of the general attention to the contents of the safe. And it

enchants. Jewelry will then be described and evaluated, now they have only counted and determined the total weight - 102 kilograms 808.3 grams.

And they decided to sort, count and weigh gold coins right here and now. Chervonets of Alexander the Third

turned out to be 413, five-rouble notes - 993. The total amount is 9095 rubles. The total weight is 11 kilograms 732.55 grams. Five rubles of Nicholas II were counted 6473, coins of 7 rubles

50 kopecks - 1612, chervonets - 4683, fifteen rubles - 543. A total of 13,311 Nikolaev coins for a total of 99,430 rubles, with a total weight of 85 kilograms 668.19 grams. Kholovanov laughs: it was not in vain that the proletarian leader prepared foreign passports for his relatives, and even a few empty blank forms in store. And then

after all, pack it all in suitcases - you won't lift it yourself. Nikolai Ivanovich Yezhov is also cheerful: it's a pity no one invented a suitcase on wheels! How would it be more convenient for Comrade Sverdlov to the very border not to drag on a hump, but to roll along on a string. And he shakes hands with Heinrich

Zhelezny and Kholovanov: thanks, comrades, we have conceived the right thing, we will turn treasures for the needs of industrialization.

6

Heinrich flopped into an armchair: how did it blow over! Very unpleasant papers could have ended up in this damned safe, but they were not. On the other hand, Unbending Heinrich pinches off small pieces from the Kolyma gold catches, takes risks, drives people across the country, forced to let them in on his secrets, and the real treasure has been waiting for almost two decades under his nose in a dusty warehouse! Can one trinket from Faberge or the Grachev brothers be compared with suitcases of golden sand? How did he not think of picking this safe? How did you forget about him? Wouldn't it be possible to open it? I would invite a foreign guest performer! Damn Holovan!

Pavel Petrovich Bulanov, without asking, poured into the boss's glass. That nodded: they say, sit down at the table yourself, and pour yourself. Sel Bulanov. Poured. We drank. - What to do with the Serpent-eater?

- There, on Kommunarka, to try everything out and, unlike the others, to bury in a coffin. Alive. - What are we going to do with her? The daughter of a commander from the General Staff. It can't be released. Scandal throughout Moscow. Put away? - Do not rush. We'll make it with this. You have to come up with something. But you can't let go. - In no case. Let him sit, we'll deal with Gutalin - we'll decide. Who do you think is digging under us? Holovan? He has a bad joke about a heavy suitcase. - That's a coincidence. Why did he mention the safe? And where did he immediately get a foreigner who is capable of screwing any safes? - I think, nevertheless, that Kolka Yezhov is digging. He also had a joke about a suitcase on wheels. Wow, smart bastard! - If only someone could be strangled, they get into the affairs of the NKVD like that. - We'll choke.

7

Pavel Petrovich returned to Kommunarka early. Here, among other things, there is a sanatorium and a hotel for the leadership of the NKVD GUGB. Here Bulanov has another apartment. Iron Heinrich spends a lot of time in Kommunarka, and the secretary should be nearby.

Today Bulanov is terribly tired. He didn't sleep all last night. Therefore, I decided for myself: now, right from seven in the evening, to sleep, wake up somewhere around midnight and go to rest. He woke up fresh and rested, washed himself, put on a tunic without insignia, and went downstairs. Here, through the efforts of Heinrich, an excellent restaurant with the Ukrainian name "Glechik" flourishes. For those who do not know: a glechik is such a jug.

The restaurant is open almost around the clock, prices are moderate, the cuisine is excellent, and not only Ukrainian, but also Polish, Russian, Georgian. There is an unusual selection of dishes and drinks, there is also a bar, a lounge, a cinema hall, a swimming pool, a Russian bath, a sports town, a dance hall, and then - a forest, a lake, and boats. Here

the wives of security officers come to rest, whose husbands are on business trips. It's always fun here. But Bulanov does not stay here. He goes out into the backyard. It's dark here at night. There are no light bulbs on the poles. The night in September is cold and starry.

There is a transformer station in the corner of the yard under centuries-old lindens. There is a completely inconspicuous passage between its back wall and a deaf two-meter fence. If you squeeze in there, you can feel for a wide board, which is nailed only from above and with only one nail. Therefore, the board moves, opening a fairly wide gap. We climb into it - and find ourselves in a nearby, completely neglected garden, overgrown with old trees and thorny, impenetrable blackberries. In the background is an abandoned house. A path has been trodden from the hole in the fence to the

house. The house is one-story, brick, covered with ivy. There is no light in the windows. Once upon a time, this house faced a quiet forest street, or a path. But then a garage was built there, and this house turned out to be cut off from roads and streets on all sides. The garden is fenced with high fences with tightly boarded gates. Over the years, the garden became wild and overgrown so that only paths remained among impassable thorny bushes.

This house has a wonderful history. In March 1921, the 10th Congress of the Communist Party adopted a decision, according to which the NEP, the New Economic Policy, was introduced in the country.

There was nothing new in that policy. It was good old capitalism: you want to make bricks, burn them and sell them? Sculpt, burn, sell. Do you want to grow bread? Grow bread. Do you want potatoes? Please. Do you want to trade bagels? Trade. Do you want to open a restaurant? Open up. And to make it all spin, a gold ducat of

exactly the same 900th test, like that of Nicholas II, was put into circulation. And the weight was the same - 8.6 grams, more precisely - 8.6026. Lenin's chervonets were printed on the same tsarist presses. Both silver rubles and fifty dollars were let into the people, in weight and shape the same as Nikolai's, but with a different pattern. Prior to that, hunger

tormented the country, stifled by a complete lack of everything, from kerosene and felt boots to nails and axes. And then suddenly everything appeared at once. But immediately there were very rich people. They were called Nepmen. So, they opened hundreds and thousands of

restaurants and cabarets. This house near Moscow was designed and built as a katran and a secret brothel. Katran is such

a breed of sharks. We have in the Far East in the Sea of Japan. And katran is a secret gambling house. This katran-brothel was erected with the concept, right next to the dachas of the top leadership of the secret police: who will look here? So they didn't find it.

As soon as the communists got back on their feet and caught their breath a little, at the end of the 20s they turned the NEP, and the necks of the Nepmen were turned. Gold coins were quickly withdrawn

from circulation. Amusement establishments were closed, multi-colored lights went out, the music subsided. The music played for a short time, the fraer danced for a short time. And this secret brothel was also abandoned. Only then did the Chekist chiefs realize what was hiding right under their noses.

This house was not demolished. They simply fenced it off on all sides, and it was overgrown with prickly wild roses, ivy and blackberries. But a holy place is never empty. The resourceful

director of the NKVD sanatorium realized: why not to use such a structure? Yes, for its intended purpose?

He ripped off the boards in the fence, trodden paths, repainted the rooms, curtained the windows with dark curtains, all the furniture was already there, just wipe off the dust. At

first they played cards in that house. Then they started spinning the wheel. The girls also showed up. Clients - from the high leadership of the NKVD. True, not from the highest. Yagoda and his deputies have no idea. Here are those who in the damned bourgeois West would be called middle-class police generals. The secret has been kept for six years. A newcomer is tested for loyalty. They warn: whoever reports, he will lose his masculine nature.

This I tell you with respect for propriety of speech. Those who are accepted into the circle of initiates are explained in a simpler and understandable language.

A high-ranking Chekist has a terrible life. Walks on the edge. Do not please the authorities, make a mistake - you will fly to hell if they leave you alive. A high-ranking Chekist has a huge responsibility. He has no time for his personal life.

So why not...

The Soviet gold chervonets was withdrawn from circulation. But not completely. People keep it under mattresses, they keep it in hiding places under thresholds, in clay pots under apple trees. And the Chekists hunt for this good and rake it out. Something sticks to your hands.

The entrance to the katran is one gold piece. And it's all. You don't have to pay more for anything. Drink, eat, have fun, somersault with the girls. But the main thing is, of course, the game. They play big here. They play for chervonets, for the forbidden American dollars and British pounds. The Nepmen were not stingy with furniture. Walnut tables under green cloth. Roulette from Monte Carlo delivered by steamer. The girls' rooms are no worse than in the best houses in Paris. Club rule: there are no military ranks. You can't come here in uniform

with insignia. Here, no one calls anyone, not only by their positions, but even by their last names. There are only names or even just playful nicknames. This is so that no one crushes anyone with their official authority. Everyone is equal here.

Pavel Petrovich threw a ringing, burning golden fire into the boatman's helpfully substituted hat, sat down at the table, unbuttoned his collar, accepted a pile and took the cards in his hands.

Chapter 14

1

During the preparation of the act on the contents of the opened Sverdlov's safe, Holovanov joked and laughed. Now all the formalities are completed, the treasures are securely hidden, the guards are removed, the working day is over. Holovanov returned to his floating base, and now he is not laughing or joking.

He offered to open the safe only in order to find documents on Yagoda there. Possible treasure discovery is only

occasion. But there really were treasures in the safe. And only they. This was the last hope to get a trump card against Yagoda.

— What are we going to do, Sei Seich? — If I knew...

— I accept ideas, even the most delusional ones. There are such? - Crazy, of course, there are. - Well,

come on! - Instead of Russula, the Snake-Eater slipped Henry some other girl.

- Well.

"We should find her.

- For

what? - They would tell Comrade Stalin that Yagoda steals young girls and keeps them in no one knows where. Thus casts a shadow on the NKVD and the Communist Party. If the bourgeois find out, shame on the Soviet Union

for the whole world! - Hey, so the idea is not crazy, but the most appropriate!

What did you do before ... And what was her name?

- Don't know. You should ask the Serpent-eater, he studied her case, he knows. Yes but where is the snake-eater now?

- There is a snake-eater, but you tell me where Yagoda can hide the girl?

Well, certainly not in prison. No one should know about her arrest. It remains - somewhere in his dacha or in the Kremlin. It's hard at the cottage. And the Kremlin is the place. Sverdlov had a private prison in the basement right under his office. Why not there? Women must protect her. You, Dragon, among the female staff of the Grand Kremlin Palace should have agents. "Among the women, you say? - Yeah. - There are some women.

2

Heinrich is, of course, Iron, but even metal gets tired. This is what is called metal fatigue. Heinrich is tired. How many sleepless nights, how many nerves. You have to spare yourself. Need to rest. Today he returned to Kommunarka early. Undressed, lay in a hot bath for a long time. A powerful shower invigorates, and a bath soothes. To increase relaxation, Heinrich adds some precious, either South Chinese or Tibetan dried leaves to the hot water. The aroma is marvelous and complete immersion in bliss. Excited, extremely satisfied, he made his way to bed, drew the

thick curtains so that the setting sun would not interfere, and fell into fresh crisp sheets, giving himself an order: evening for sleep, and after midnight - rest. I didn't set the alarm clock, knowing that I would wake up by midnight. And woke up. Fresh, rested. Only slept for

eight minutes at midnight. He smiled to himself: nevertheless, the accuracy is almost like in a pharmacy. It is not given to everyone to hone their brain so that even in a dream, even resting in sweet dreams, they still observe accuracy.

Now for cheerfulness - a hot shower of terrible pressure. Drops, like pellets, on the head, on the shoulders, on the back and chest whip!

He rubbed himself with a towel, as if with sandpaper, and his whole body burned and swelled. At the age of a man! In the very color. 44 years old. November 7 is a red day in the calendar. On this day of the Great Revolution, he will turn 45.

At 44, he achieved a lot: People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, General Commissar of State Security, member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. But still ahead. Gotalin promises a place in the highest hierarchy of the party - in the Politburo. It would be nice. Heinrich remembered Michurin's slogan and chuckled.

Michurin is a great innovator. He grew such varieties of fruit trees that the whole world is amazed. Michurin apple trees are breaking under the weight of apples! They take foreigners through the Michurin gardens, show them that they gnaw at their hats and ties with envy: there really is no deception here - all the apple trees are broken at the very root! That's how we do it! Let the bourgeoisie be angry and spiteful, looking at our achievements! So

this same Michurin threw the slogan to the masses: we are not we can expect favors from nature. To take them from her is our task!

When Gotalin promises a seat in the Politburo, Henry smiles gratefully, but repeats Michurin's wisdom to himself.

In this mood, with this smile on his lips, he went down to the hiding place. The entrance is masterfully disguised. In the bedroom along the wall there are built-in wardrobes with overcoats, raincoats, tunics, civilian suits. There is a wall behind them. But, going into the closet and closing the doors behind you, you can move this wall a little to the side, enter there and return

the wall to its place. Even if, in the absence of Heinrich, someone looks into the bedroom, they will not find anything suspicious. There's just no Heinrich, that's all. And he returns in the same way, first from the closet through

the hole, looking to see if anyone is there. Once in the dark, Heinrich climbs down the brackets and goes through an underground corridor. This corridor was built according to his project. They dug a trench for heating pipes, concreted it, laid concrete slabs on top, covered it with earth. And they forgot. Then the prickly blackberry grew here. A trench for the pipe was laid elsewhere. Various teams of builders worked here. They arrived alone: they dig a trench. Why, why - none of their damn business. The other team is to concrete. The third is to cover. The labor force is free. There are so many camps around Moscow. Here you have builders and engineers. They know how to dig holes.

While the pits were being dug, an architect worked for Heinrich, a bourgeois wrecker, delivered from an ELEPHANT. SLON is, as you know, the Solovetsky Special Purpose Camp. Heinrich personally set the task for the architect under a receipt of non-disclosure of state secrets: in one of the bourgeois capitals - I won't say where, the secret is terrible (but with a hint of Paris) - we will build a very high-class brothel. But such that we know and see what is happening in it. And to exercise control with minimal effort. There is also a gambling establishment. Why is this necessary, even if you break your head for a year, you will never guess, and Heinrich has no right to reveal such secrets. Yes, the pest is not supposed to know this: the task is set - carry it out. Heinrich created conditions for the architect. The room

is bright. True, with bars on the windows. Necessary equipment - on demand. Provided food for the restaurant. What else? Special literature on how a brothel functions and what should be in it? Please. All literature on this entertaining topic has long been prepared, translated and carefully studied. Sketched architect sketch. The building should be one-story, in shape (only in shape!) Resembling an elongated

barrack or warehouse. External decorations are a special issue. Let's say we have laid the north-south axis and our plan has been superimposed on it. At the southern end is a hall where girls meet clients. There is also a bar here. At the northern end is the same roulette room. And also a bar.

In the middle part of the building, along the central north-south axis, we are building a very thick wall that divides this part into two halves. In the eastern part - rooms for gamblers, in the western - for girls. All these rooms are windowless. They are not needed here. The rooms are adjacent to the central thick wall, the doors open onto the corridors.

Thus, we have two corridors along the outer walls. From the southern hall, you can go through the western corridor to the northern hall, having doors to the girls' rooms on the right, and an outer wall with small windows on the left (it is possible without them). Or the path can be made along the eastern corridor. In this case, the outer wall will be to the right, to the left - the doors to the gamblers' rooms.

There remains the question of ventilation of rooms in which there are no windows. The solution is simple. circulation is natural. Air pipes - in

central thick wall. The

highlight is that the thick central wall is not monolithic, but double with a corridor inside. The floor of the corridor is raised one and a half meters above the floor of the rest of the premises. One controller can, walking along the corridor, see what is happening in both halls and in any of the rooms. Observation - through the ventilation grilles. View - from the side and slightly

from above. To get into this observation corridor, on which rooms are strung like a rod, it is necessary to lay an underground gallery. But Heinrich understands this even without an architect. He already took care of that.

Technical problem: how to ensure full ventilation of all rooms, while eliminating the penetration of sounds from one to another. You need to think about this. - Brain, - Heinrich

said. Another engineer

found a solution. Also from exposed enemies. Heinrich did not tell him the details. It's easier here: here is the corridor, here are the bars, here the air circulates. When the

planning was completed, Heinrich decided to erect a trial building without any external decorations, not in some bourgeois capital, but here, near Moscow, right on Kommunarka, and see how it all would work. Built quickly. We can when they want. They built on the same rotational basis: one brigade does one thing, not knowing why, not even guessing in which part of the country this construction is being carried out. And the other team continues.

Heinrich no longer remembers what happened to that architect and the imprisoned engineers. He's only sure that they won't tell anyone. Furniture and

everything you need - from France and Sweden, roulette, as we already know, from Monte Carlo. Heinrich has the money for all this, for which he does not have to report to anyone.

What does it cost to build a one-story, almost windowless building? Heinrich only made sure that the walls were stronger, and the poured concrete ceilings, so that no one from the attic accidentally discovered the observation corridor. All electrical wiring, plumbing, sewerage, heating system are designed in such a way that there is no need to gouge and drill the central thick wall in case of repair.

Behind the fence, a hotel was erected for the leadership of the NKVD and a rest house. Heinrich kept all this under his personal control. So they planned that the windows of the hotel would not look out onto the backyard, and that there would be no extra light here, and that the brick building of the transformer would be under centuries-old lindens, and also that there would be a narrow passage between the rear wall of the transformer and the fence. Upon completion of construction, the katran was given such a look as if it had not been built now, but several years ago, and then abandoned. Heinrich

replaced the entire composition of Kommunarka. And among the new composition, a rumor started: this, they say, was where the Nepmen had fun. It remains to find a suitable host. It's quite easy. Heinrich has file cabinets for all the arrested owners of katrans, thieves' raspberries and underground brothels throughout the Soviet Union - choose the one you

like, release early from prison for good behavior, by mistake, without understanding, offer a job as the director of the NKVD hotel and carefully, without scaring, toss an idea: that's what a treasure disappears behind the fence! What furniture! As in the best houses of Paris and Amsterdam. And everything is abandoned. And no one needs. Yes, hidden so - you will not find! The director of the hotel and sanatorium of the NKVD pecked instantly. To maintain an underground brothel, one must be a poet, at least in one's soul. Heinrich selected the poet. And the soul of the poet could not bear such a gift of fate to fall into disrepair. Again, the clients are here, and they have a lot of money. That uncle trodden a path in the impassable blackberry, wiped the dust on the card tables, and the roulette spun! And who will arrest him, if the katran is inside a site fenced on all sides by high

fences, and even fenced off inside by many other impassable fences, if this entire territory is guarded by the elite troops of the NKVD, if the clients are mounted Chekists? He recruited girls instantly. There are so many beautiful girls in Moscow. And there are always a lot of people who want such a job. He had experience, he knew where and how to recruit. When he opened the case, he also attracted young Chekist wives to him: your husband in distant Brazil is fanning the fire of the World Revolution, and you alone in the wards are languishing like a princess-Nesmeyana, and here is such a job! Interesting, funny, pleasant,

monetary.

Heinrich went up the stairs to the observation corridor. He passed this corridor always first from the south not the north. As in our song: from the southern mountains to the northern seas... I started with a tour of the hall where the girls were talking to the guests. This is the red room. He is always in the dark. There are thick carpets, the muffled light of burgundy lamps, soft leather sofas in islands, separated from each other by heavy velvet curtains, which can be completely drawn at any moment so that no one bothers anyone. There is a bar, and in the bar - only girls. And a small stage in the middle where they dance, entertaining and attracting.

Next, Heinrich inspects the rooms on the west side. They are all different: a Turkish room, like a harem chamber, a torture chamber with shackles and lashes, a school room with a board and a desk, a prison, hospital, railway room, like a compartment of a long-distance train, a monastery, an office, a military one with spent shells and a broken machine gun, but there is simply cozy. A very popular room with a cobblestone pavement and a gas lantern. Girls dress up as nurses, soldiers, policemen, secretaries, schoolgirls, nuns, society ladies or dirty street

inhabitants

harems,

whores.

The roulette room is green. There are serious people here. Here they lose (but also win!) Ranks and positions. There is big money involved here. There are big problems here.

From this hall, Heinrich returns, looking around the rooms on the east side. Inspection is a combination of useful and pleasant. Heinrich knows all the rumors that circulate at the top of the NKVD leadership. Knows first hand. And after listening to an hour of chatter in the card rooms, he now returns to his favorite pastime for a long time: controlling the rooms on the west side.

Heinrich loves porn. Anything: photographs, drawings, films. But most of all, this one is real and real. This is not a staged shot. This is real life in all its diversity. It's terribly interesting. Heinrich is surprised at one thing: how could Nikolai Palkin build the Grand Kremlin Palace without

foreseeing the possibility of spying and eavesdropping? Heinrich himself examined the chambers of the first

floors. There are thick walls in which there are no holes. And ventilation is huge windows to the outside. The thought of stupid Nikolai flashed and was forgotten. Henry immersed in contemplation...

3

- Comrade Holovanov, there is some kind of hungry kid there. asks. -

What's a shack?

- Don't know. He says he should return your jacket and a rubber bag stuffed with something. -

Shketa, captain, call. Tell me I've been waiting. And take a closer look at the person. Shket deserves respect.

4

The Dragon had a gift. For some reason, he could talk to any woman. They seemed to be asking him how they could help. And they helped. Sometimes, even if he didn't ask for it. The Kremlin for the Dragon has always been the main object of undercover penetration. Telephone operators and telegraph operators, cleaners and secretaries, nurses and cipher clerks, librarians and curators of the Kremlin museums - this is the circle of his recruitment. Everything was built on love. He loved his agents selflessly, to the point of madness. His agents responded with equally reckless love, forgetting family and home, risking jobs, reputations, freedom, and even life. From them, he knew, if not all the secrets of the Kremlin, then many of them.

But he had no agents in the southern wing of the basement of the Grand Kremlin Palace. Hands did not reach. Early this morning, before dawn, he went down there, talked with a busty woman in a blue State Security beret and a Nagant revolver on his right side. She understood him. She said that yes, the

girl is sitting in the room that was usually used for rest by the security shift on duty

Comrade Yagoda. Now the guards have been temporarily removed. Is the busty woman ready to help comrade Alexander Ivanovich Holovanov? Yes, I'm ready, but it won't help. Because she will not let the girl out under any circumstances. Just talk to her? No, and it won't.

Why? Yes, simply because the iron door is locked with two locks, and different people have the keys. It is possible to come to an agreement with one person, but there is no

sense in this. What if we talk through the door? Through the door, whatever. Speak, just hurry up. Athas is declared to be a loud cough.

An aunt stood across the corridor, blocking it like a revolutionary barricade, and the Dragon went where the woman pointed to him, sighing and swaying his chest.

5

The door is iron, forged by the masters of Nikolashka Palkin. The door in the opening is like in a small tunnel. There is no peephole in this door, as in an ordinary prison door, because it is not a prison at all. This room serves as a prison only occasionally. The Dragon

knocked. He called softly: - Girl,
girl! How would he
know what her name is. She
responded. Apparently she didn't sleep.
Girl, I've come to help you.

"Greetings, citizen provocateur! Girl, I don't
have much time. Let's say that I'm a provocateur, but you have nothing to lose. If you go free, Yagoda might get in trouble. Therefore, Yagoda will be forced to kill you in any case, as a completely unnecessary witness. For him, the best option is for you to disappear without a trace. If you tell me something or if you remain silent, it makes no difference. Now suppose that I am not a provocateur. You don't say anything and I can't help you. Tell everything you know about him. Any little thing can be the key. And then maybe I'll do something against him. This will be your salvation. Only sooner. Now they will come here.

- Fine. Listen. In the autumn there will be a plenum of the Central Committee. Security will be carried by a special company of Yagoda ...

— How do you know that?

"I'm awfully smart. So, Comrade Yagoda does not care who how will vote at the plenary session.

- And why is that? -

He is important to another: who will guard this plenum. -

Understood. What

else? "Comrade Yezhov is under threat. The attempt on his life is not

I exclude.

- I have the same opinion. Any details, any evidence? - No.

But some Gultin will also get it. - Proof! - I don't

have them. There is

something completely different. Today, in some Kommunarka, some snake-eater will be buried alive in a coffin. Does this name mean something to you? -

Speaks. Thank

you! The dragon runs

along the corridor. I remembered that I should have at least asked the girl what her name was. But the Dragon is not up to that now. He kissed the busty aunt, who protected his peace, on the run on his scarlet lips and disappeared around the bend.

6

Those who are at the very top travel in a personal train. More and with a pair of armored escort trains.

Those who are of lower rank have personal wagons. And the former member of the Politburo and the former ruler of Ukraine, and now the first deputy of the People's Commissar of Heavy Industry, Comrade Pyatakov Georgy Leonidovich now travels almost like an ordinary Soviet person, almost like everyone else. His car is not for one, but for four passengers at once. Each passenger has two interconnected compartments. One compartment is a sleeping compartment, the other is a saloon. In addition to these four double compartments, there is a kitchen and a buffet in the carriage. And two compartments for conductors and a cook.

Comrade Pyatakov had very little left of his former privileges. Unlike trains for ordinary Soviet people, a car with double compartments does not arrive at a station for everyone, but at a special one, which is located in the Kursk railway station area, which is disguised as a smoky locomotive depot. On the approach to Moscow, the special car is unhooked from the main train and driven along another branch under the arches of a supposedly locomotive depot.

Comrade Pyatakov had a good rest. Now he is determined to tirelessly continue the struggle for the cause of Lenin-Stalin. He is ready to fight any deviations from the general line of the party, he is ready to personally shoot the enemies of the people, no matter who they turn out to be - even yesterday's colleagues in the Politburo, even his own wife.

Here is Moscow. Get to work soon. I would rather plunge into everyday work, into the boiling and seething of great construction

projects. Once upon a time, in October 1914, the revolutionary Pyatakov fled from the fierce tsarist hard labor to Switzerland. Then it was easy. The revolutionary Pyatakov managed to do this even at the height of the World War, having overcome the fronts and lands of the enemies. The Germans let such people go freely to Switzerland to see Lenin, and then the whole gang, like lice in a test tube, was returned to Russia.

Now there is no war, and Comrade Pyatakov is not in hard labor, but in responsible leadership work. He is invested with great power. But don't run away to Switzerland now. The accursed tsarism is over, now we have complete freedom under the rule of the working people.

And for some reason, the former revolutionary took a deep breath. The porters jumped up, not asking where to carry them - here the porters are special, without questions or answers they know which suitcase to drag to which personal limousine. They picked up the suitcases of Comrade Pyatakov and his other companions - the Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, the Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Trade and the

Prosecutor of the Moscow Region. Everything is special at the special station. There is a special duty officer, special shooters, special carriers who do not require money and do not take tips. Comrade Pyatakov hurried after them.

And suddenly Iron Heinrich came out of the next compartment: - Hello Georgy Leonidovich!

— Hello, Comrade General Commissar of State Security. - How was your vacation? -

Thank you, great. -

There is a case. - I'm listening.

- The trial of

Zinoviev,

Kamenev, Smirnov and other bastards is over. They are shot. - Dogs - dog death! - Right! If I'm not mistaken, you

wanted to speak at this trial? - With

great pleasure. Sorry it didn't work out. - It's OK. The next trial of the former leaders, and

now enemies of the people, is in four months, in January of the

thirty-seventh year. Ready? - Ready! I have always sought the role of a public prosecutor! — No, no, Georgy Leonidovich! You will not go as an accuser, but

accused. I almost forgot to tell you: you're under arrest.

7

If you say that the Serpent Eater did not scream, then this will not be true. He yelled. He yelled. He squealed. The pain was terrible, I couldn't help it. could.

Torture was led by the head of the group of executors of sentences of the Lefortovo remand prison, Comrade Rainy, Comrade Sinister was especially zealous. The rest were not far behind.

What is the main thing in torture? The main thing is not to let the client leave “in English” without saying goodbye, not to miss him into death ahead of time. The one who directs the torture must be at the same time a doctor, a psychologist and a little bit a poet. Asking is not a profession. This is a calling. This is talent. Not everyone is given. Another client is healthy in appearance, but something was slightly pinched on him, and his heart stopped. And that's it. And the end of the torture. What is this? This is marriage at work. They

worked with the Serpenteater without marriage. They not only worked with him, but demonstrated how to work. It's like in medical school: doing

a group of surgeons perform a filigree operation, and around behind the glass a hundred medical students are closely watching, writing down notes.

Everything was exactly like that. Only the second and third platoons of a special company of the NKVD were not sitting behind glass, but simply on a hillock, like on the podium of

the Dynamo stadium. The task of the torturers was simple: to find out who sent the Serpent Eater to steal the suitcase

in Yaroslavl. Neither the torture team nor the diligent students are supposed to know what kind of suitcase it is. Direction: as soon as he starts to talk too much, shut his mouth. Find out only who sent, who was a partner, who provided insurance, transport, overalls, tools and everything else. Listeners follow the duel between the

investigators and the defendant with the deepest attention and passion. It's like a chess game of grandmasters in a silent hall. Sometimes the silent hall suddenly begins to rumble, like a bird market. The stakes are rising. Here they are arguing about when the guy will crack, about whether he will die before the end of the session, about whether he will inject himself to the end or still doesn't want something

issue. The

snake-eater not only yelled. He was still laughing. There are people in whom some nerve centers work somehow differently. He laughed in excruciating pain. The chuckle turned into a scream and back into a chuckle.

He did not believe in either gods or devils, but now he was asking for death from someone, not knowing whom. Or insanity. But death did not come. And the mind was not troubled. The torture dragged on. From time to time one of the performer's henchmen ran off to report to someone on the phone about the results, or rather, about their absence. There were no

results. Now a heart-rending cry resounded the forest clearing, then wild laughter. Then sometimes the Serpent-Eater calmed down for a long time, overturning into a deep faint. And it's all.

And the result could not be.

Chapter 1 5

1

The head of torture made a gross mistake, and no one noticed it, no one corrected him. When the Serpent-Eater, beaten half to death, was dragged out to the clearing for the final torture, Comrade Extreme showed him a fresh coffin and an equally fresh pit and explained that the buried Serpent-Eater would be alive. The audience laughed, not realizing that the leader was making an unforgivable

mistake. Torture is different. But the main thing is to remember: what is all this for? If for the sake of revenge - then please, torture for health, then bury it alive in a coffin. But this is torture for the sake of obtaining very important information. Burying in a coffin - yes, it will be revenge. But first, tear out the information, your wooden head! Do not confuse the sinner with the righteous!

Every time pain washed over him like champagne foaming over the rim of a crystal glass, Snake Eater was ready to tell everything.

He opened his mouth, full of sharp fragments of broken teeth in wisps of bloody foam. He was ready to name both Lyuska and Kholovanov with Sey Seich, and tell where the steamboat was hiding near the Northern river port, and report how he managed to steal the suitcase and what happened to this suitcase later. But at the last moment, at the very last moment, he remembered the coffin standing next to him: just tell me, and they will hide you there. Therefore, instead of recognition, he yelled: you guys will count! He no

longer remembered and did not understand the meaning of these words. He only knew that after them there would be a new surge of terrible pain, but not a coffin. He didn't fight for his life. He knew that all was lost. But he delayed the moment—one more minute. Only for one. And again he

yelled: it will count for you! Torture comes in waves: either an extreme pressure approaching death itself, or a relaxing ebb, so that the heart moves away a little, so as

not to break the thread. And then all the same questions.

And all the same
answers. - Who was the partner? What was
his name? - I don't
know ... Ah-
ah-ah! - Who is he? - Not
by ... U-a-a-xxx! - How
tall is he? - One and a half to two meters, no more ... Ah-ah-ah ... Ha-ha-
ha ... It will count! It was then that the order came by telephone to end the performance.

2

Rushing through Moscow, a car of some kind of abnormal appearance: a steel green box, a predatory sharp muzzle like a battering ram, four large-diameter wheels on each side, a roar for half the city. The car does not recognize any traffic lights, any traffic controllers. They shy away in the opposite-transverse sides: they will smash! NKVD motorcycles are chasing her. The pursuers whistle: stop, you bastard! We will shoot at the wheels! Yes, only in the city, and at such a speed, they are unlikely to decide to shoot. Here a marvelous car

will fly out of the city, then we will riddle! But it's the motorcyclists who just calm themselves and cheer themselves up. Outside the city,

they will not shoot at the wheels either. Because it's pointless. Because the wheels are iron, and only around the perimeter they are lined with rubber, they are not afraid of holes, shoot, don't shoot. Wait, what kind of car is this? Sorry, I'm getting ahead of myself a bit. Let's go in order. It was like this: Dragon jumped on a

motorcycle, Seich Seich jumped into the back

seat, holding in his hands, pressing to his chest, something long, like a shovel, but much

heavier, wrapped in a soldier's blanket. So he can't even hold on to the Dragon's back. Looks like it will break. The Dragon rushed along Gorky Street, past Yuri Dolgoruky, past the pensive Pushkin, past the Belorussian-Baltic railway station to Khodynka. Flew past the checkpoint. Here, at the airport,

know they let him through. But not everywhere. Where there was a display of military equipment recently, much has already been removed. But something remains. And this something is fenced with barbed wire, and at the entrance there is a formidable sentry. Last time, the Dragon had a scarlet satin pass with the profile of the Spasskaya Tower and the inscription "Passage everywhere." But the show ended, he handed over that pass. How to get? Just.

With a confident commanding tread, he stepped decisively towards sentry, with his thumb pointed over his shoulder at Sey Seich:

This one is with me!

- Eat! answered the sentry, letting them both pass. If this one is with you, then, of course, let it pass! Only minutes later

At five o'clock the sentry came to his senses: this one is with you, but who are you?

But it was too late. The dragon has already called the chief, who is the most important here, and has already scolded

him: - Where is the BT-7 tank?

- Here he is. -

Where is the tower? The tower has been taken down. To the 1st Moscow Proletarian Division sent. - For what? - A

new welded conical tower is being developed for the BT-7, but its testing has not yet been completed. Therefore, a cylindrical tower from the BT-5 was temporarily used for the display. The show is over, it is no longer needed, returned to the rightful owner. - OK. Are the tracks removed? — Removed. -

And that's good. Is the tank loaded? -

Refueled. - Where is the driver?

Vaughn is running. - Give it here. "Wait,

citizen, who are you?"

Here the head of the special department arrived

in time, pulled out a pistol: what a thing you have seen - strangers entered the secret object without a pass! — Document! - shouts the special officer. - Submit your document!

The shift of the guard on duty is raised - six fighters with a greyhound breeding here rush, horseshoes rumble, rifle bolts click.

- To arrest! - squeals the special officer.

The tank driver, not reacting to the special officer, whispers something into his boss's ear.

Dragon to him: repeat!

He repeats: I saw you, comrade, at the demonstration of equipment, you Comrade Stalin whispered!

- Right! And I saw how you, masters, Comrade Stalin praised. Run to the car! Backwater!

The driver ran, the tank roared. And

the guards bristled at the Dragon with bayonets, riddled!

Holovanov - Say to Seich: show them the thing!

This Seich knows what to do even without an order. I threw off the soldier's blanket, the DP light machine gun was bared: I'll sparkle into cabbage! Drop your weapons! No one abandoned their weapons, but they were careful not to shoot and indulge with bayonets. The tank rolled up. Holovanov jumped inside, pointed a huge pistol at the forehead of the special officer: whoever decides to fool around,

I will shoot the special officer. The moment here is delicate: this Seich needs to get into the tank. But first, hand over the machine gun to the Dragon. At this time, both are defenseless. Therefore, the special officer was taken hostage. The dragon pokes him in the

face with a pistol: well! He ordered everyone to lower their weapons. Lowered. Took Dragon machine gun, Sey Seich climbed into

the tank. And they rushed forward, turning

the barrier. After them - a dozen motorcycles. First, two. Then, on Ordynka, others jumped out of the lanes. The driver-master

drives through intersections, not reacting to traffic lights. He has no left or right visibility. He has only forward. The motorway tank was not invented to follow the rules of the road. He doesn't watch. This Seich and the Dragon on the floor of the fighting compartment are shaking from a

terrible vibration, sometimes only briefly looking back, protruding a little from under the armor, otherwise the pursuers will make a hole in their head with shooting, it's time to scare them. That's why there is a DP light machine gun, which quite recently one girl lacked so much in the Konotop park.

- This Seich, where is the store from the machine gun? Sei Seich apologizes: I forgot

in a hurry. No wonder: the Dragon flew in, yelling like a madman: the machine gun, they say, grab it. This Seich grabbed it. And the Dragon did not shout about the store with cartridges, because the store was not with him. This, by the way, is very psychologically explainable. Look, in the films, our goodie grabbed a machine gun from the hands of a dead enemy and ran. Have you ever seen him take a pouch with spare magazines? That's it.

It also worked that Sei Seich had never held such a thing in his hands. Pointing a light machine gun at the guards who ran up, Seich did not know that the machine gun should also have a disk magazine with forty-seven rounds, just like the British Lewis. But the guards did not understand this either. The mug was looking at them too brutally, its eyes flashing furiously, poking its muzzle in the snout with a machine-gun muzzle. But even if there were

cartridges, Seich still did not know how to handle this thing. Now would be the right time to shy away with a long burst over their heads, to frighten their pursuers, but, unfortunately, there is nothing.

A motorway tank flew out of the city. It

would be nice to go with a tower, with a cannon and a machine gun. Yes, a manual DP would also fit if there were cartridges in it. But there are none. That's why you have to be smart. - You, brother, slow down with a turn as soon as I slap your hand

on your shoulder. Carrier nods understandingly, not distracted from the control. Then his Dragon slammed, catching that the most impudent motorcyclist to overtake went.

The tank screeched, suddenly turning across the road at full speed. The motorcyclist cut into the armored side between the two medium road wheels. Drove, without delay, returned the car to the rut and pumped it up. The next pursuer crashed into a broken motorcycle, into a corpse flattened on the road, tumbling over the steering wheel. The rest, experienced scientists, lagged behind.

For three tankers - one pistol. True, big. "Lahti". The best pistol in the world. But where to go?

There are a lot of things on Kommunarka: here you will find management's dachas, and a sanatorium, and a shooting range, and a firing squad, as usual, and all sorts of institutions that not everyone is supposed to know about. Therefore, the driver slowed down near the first Chekist he met, the Dragon pulled him up by the collar into the tank: lead!

Once in his youth, Dragon had a company foreman. And the best foremen, as everyone knows, are from Ukrainians: **freeze the saying**. This foreman had a favorite saying: I will torment! And now

a ferocious Dragon from a roaring tank, waving a huge pistol, was yelling (for some reason with a Ukrainian accent, just like that foreman): **Dae! I will terzat!** And random onlookers scattered in

horror. It is not smart. Here, in Kommunarka, there is silence, which the sounds of executions do not particularly break. Because they ate and pines muffle the noise. Here titmouses fly, bunnies jump, and suddenly - a roar and a roar, and a huge uncle from the tank swears, either drunk or crazy. Here is the fence. And the gate is high. It was through these

gates that the tank crashed, crushing and tearing off its wings above the wheels, but scattering the gate into chips. There is no turret in the tank. The hole is round where the tower should be. With a crunch and a crack, fragments of boards with bolts, nuts and four-inch nails flew over this hole without hooking anyone. This Seich with the Dragon lowered their heads, falling to the floor. The Chekist, who was no longer needed, was thrown out of the tank by the Dragon in advance. The tank flew into the clearing in front of the fresh pits, and, turning around on the spot, froze near the gang of executioners, purring with its engine, like a big affectionate cat in the good hands of the owner. Carried - behind the

levers, Seich Seich scares the people with a machine gun, the Dragon jumped to the ground and, raking the crowd with a glance, rushed to its center. Here the coffin is brand new, fresh, made of unplanned pine boards, preserving the smell of the taiga. And the uncle knocks with a hammer, his mouth is full of nails. A shot rang

out. The dragon slammed into the ground, right at the feet of an armed proletarian who was bent at the coffin, with a hammer. He yelped and jumped back. Dragon pistol in the face: open!

How many Chekists there were, I can't tell you for certain. I do not remember exactly. Offhand - 130-150. Why none of them fired, why no one objected to the Dragon and interfered with him, I don't know - I can't explain, but I won't lie. The Dragon has a pistol in

a holster already, he is defenseless, but everyone present immediately forgot about a tank without a turret and about a ferocious uncle with a machine gun in his hands: all attention is on Kholovanov. And under his gaze, three executors of sentences from the commandant's special group of the Lefortovo pre-trial detention center rushed to tear off the coffin lid. The snake-eater Dragon did not recognize.

The snake-eater was lying on his left side, curled up, bringing his knees to his stomach, as far as the space of the coffin allowed. He has torn pants on. He was dead. But maybe unconscious. His face is a bloody burgundy and blue pillow, his hands and feet are black, his whole body is torn as if with hooks, beaten with his own Serpentine French puzzle. The dragon took him in his arms:

- Snake-eater, dear, are you alive, huh? One word, one word. Be with me, be with me. It's me. You recognized me, right? Don't leave, Snake. Don't go! I came to save you. And Sey Seich is here. We are your friends. Well! We arrived in a tank... Sei Seich threw his

machine gun at the bottom of the fighting compartment. Dropped out of uselessness. Jumped out. Together, Zmееedovo's body was lifted. The driver helped to take him. All of them are now defenseless. Shoot all four, and there will be enough room for everyone in the pits

of Kommunarka. The tank roared, turning on the spot. Ran from a place so that the dirt clods from under all the wheels. The Dragon shouted something that no one heard because of the roar. But everyone understood: you guys will count!

Morning. Unbending Heinrich in his Kremlin office. He squeezed all his emotions into a coma and threw them out of his soul. Now he is calm and cold. What to do? Think!

Kholovan pulled the Zmeeeeed out of the hands of the NKVD by force. The authority of Iron Henry was dealt a blow of unheard-of force. The rumor about this will crawl first of all through the NKVD, then - and further. The retaliation must be stronger. It should be a devastating death blow. Whatever the situation, Holovan will not live. He must not only die, but die a painful death. In addition, the situation has become much

clearer. The suitcase was stolen by Zmeeeeed, Holovan stood behind him. And who is behind him? Kholovan is spinning next to Gutalin, obviously carrying out some of his secret orders. But is Gutalin behind him in this case? That is the question. In recent days, Gutalin has been very unkind to Kholovan. This may mean that Holovan is digging under Iron Heinrich, but he acts according to his own will, according to his own understanding.

More recently, Heinrich missed the moment. Missed this moment! From June 1 to 4, the Plenum of the Central Committee was held in the Grand Kremlin Palace, which discussed the draft of the new Stalinist Constitution. All the doves sat in the same room. 136 people. This is all the leadership of the Soviet Union. ALL! The protection of the Kremlin is in the hands of the NKVD. Here also a special company to introduce for greater security. And no problem. Why did you pull? Why wait for a more opportune moment? It's like in cards: I thought, give me just a little more. And went over! Did you overdo it? What happened, what happened? Nothing special. Some scoundrel stole a tank without a turret from Khodynka, pulled out a prisoner of the NKVD by force. Nobody really knows anything about this yet. What to

do? What can be done **now**? Entrances and exits to the Kremlin under the control of the NKVD. And three hundred selected fellows, like three hundred Spartans, will do whatever they are ordered to do. But! But now

there is no Gutalin in Moscow. He relaxes in the Crimea. You cannot capture all the leaders in one hall. Oh, if only it were possible to block all communications in the country. Here in Moscow there is a seizure of power, and Gutalin is sitting in the Crimea with his phone turned off. It would be an option. But the worst enemy of Yagoda Rykov, who after Lenin was the head of government, sat down in the People's Commissariat of Communications. Yagoda is waging a fierce struggle against Rykov in the hope of bringing him out as an enemy of the people in the upcoming trial.

If we wait, will the situation get better or worse? She will be worse. Something cracks and spreads under the feet of Iron Heinrich: the courier has disappeared, a suitcase with golden sand has been stolen, the man who stole the suitcase has been pulled out of the hands of the NKVD. Events become more and more unpleasant, the pace is increasing. trend, however. We have to perform today. Tomorrow will be too late. Secretary Bulanov knocked on the door:

"Comrade Kholovanov to see you." How is

Holovanov? - So - he came, he asks
to take it immediately. -

Did you search him? "He handed the pistol into my hands
without warning, and he

himself

offered to be searched.

Holovanov entered, smiling broadly. He extended his hand, as if nothing had happened between them, shook Heinrich's hand firmly, which was not steel at all to the touch. But Kholovanov knew that the strength of a person is not at all in the strength of his arms, legs and back, but the power of the brain of Iron Henry was appreciated by the Dragon long ago and to the highest degree. Heinrich offered to sit opposite:

I'm listening to you, comrade Kholovanov.

Holovanov checked whether the top button on the collar was fastened.
tunic and, smiling, announced the good news:

- Genrikh Grigoryevich, from now on, all communications of the Soviet Union are under your control. Comrade Stalin ordered. Rykov was removed from his post. Appointed you as People's Commissar of Communications, take charge.

Here it is! Heinrich's left hand is under the table. And with this hand he squeezed his knee so as not to burst out laughing with joy: finally!

He calmed his inner jubilation and threw indifferently: - How am I going

to cope with two people's commissariats at once - and communications, and the NKVD?

— Comrade Stalin

foresaw everything. From the post of drug commissar

The NKVD took you down. Comrade Yezhov will now stand at the head of the NKVD.

Next to Stalin's office is Kholovanov's office. The dragon sank heavily into a chair. He took out his heavy Lahti pistol from his holster. I looked at him for a long time. He knew that sometimes situations happen when a person shoots himself in the temple, but remains alive. Better in the heart. And they will write on the grave: "Kholovanov A.I. July 10, 1905 - September 26, 1936." However, they won't write. Often nothing is written on the graves of suicides. What

he did is unforgivable. Kholovanov cheerfully informed Yagoda that he had been removed from the post of People's Commissar of the NKVD. But... But no one filmed Yagoda. No one appointed Yezhov. It's just that right now you need to confuse the cards. It is necessary, at least for a short time, to remove Yagoda from the

levers of power. Otherwise... The dragon said, but Heinrich believed. How not to believe? These things are not joked about. Although Heinrich himself is a big joker. Why not, why not make a joke?.. If Heinrich took his word for it, then he was a fool! So, not everything is lost for the Dragon.

The Dragon picked up the phone of a closed connection. This phone has no numbers. This channel is direct only to Stalin. But this connection is with all his telephones at once: in the Kremlin, in the building of the Central Committee on Staraya Square, at dachas near and far, in Yalta, on Lake Ritsa, in all places where he can be. "I

hear you, comrade Kholovanov. -

Comrade Stalin, Yagoda must be removed. - Do you have any additional

information? - He steals gold, young girls ...

- This is not good. But is there anything serious? - No.

Just a premonition. I think that Comrade Yezhov is under threat, the entire Central Committee is under threat if it convenes in one hall, but under threat if it does not. And you too, Comrade Stalin. - Where did you get such

information? - The source is not verified,

dark. But it matches mine

suspensions, with my premonitions. But no proof? - There is no

evidence. - And what

did you decide to do, relying on information from an unverified source and on your premonitions?

- Not only decided, but also did. -
What?

- Comrade Stalin, I announced to Yagoda that he had been removed from the post of People's Commissar of Internal Affairs.

"And...he

believed?" - I believed. "That is proof of guilt. He believed so easily because he was guilty. The cat smells whose meat it has eaten. And who did you appoint

instead of him? —

Comrade

Yezhov. - Why? "He is

Yagoda's main enemy. - Right. I will now write a telegram to the Politburo demanding that Yagoda be removed and Yezhov appointed. It's time to clean the Augean stables of the NKVD.

- Comrade Stalin ... Could you urgently come to Moscow? - For what?

- What if

Yagoda does not want to give up his post and come out with weapons? Your presence here is essential. Here right now. Just in case. The train is long. I myself will fly for you!

- Comrade Holovanov, I have faster means movement. The

door swung open, Comrade Stalin came out of the next room.

6

Holovanov was taken

aback. - When you

returned? - I didn't go anywhere. I have followed your work. I kept the situation under control without interfering with it. Do you know why Bonaparte lost? Holovanov

wrinkled his brow, trying to recall the provisions of Marxist theory about the role of the individual in history and the role of the masses. "No theory, comrade Kholovanov. Bonaparte himself explained:

Sans moi on ne fait que des

Betises. - I, Comrade Stalin, do not speak French very well.

- Me too. But you need to know the classics. It can be translated something like this: in my absence, only stupid things are done. This is a verdict on the whole Bonaparte system of power. Himself a genius, but completely incapable of choosing the right people for himself. When he is in place, it is almost always a victory. Without it, defeat. In his absence, as he himself stated, only stupid things happened. He couldn't be everywhere at the same time. Because - a series of large and small defeats, which ended in a general collapse. And the system should work in the absence of the leader in the same way as in his presence. To do this, you need to have the right people in key positions. Choosing them is simple: give a person full power and see what happens. I gave you full power and saw what comes out. It turns out well.

Stalin picked up the phone: "Give me Yezhov." Comrade Yezhov, I'm calling you from Sochi. It seemed to you that I was in Moscow? No no. I am not in Moscow. It's just a good link. So. Here in Sochi, Comrade Zhdanov and I consulted and decided to appoint you People's Commissar of Internal Affairs. It is clear that you remain in the post of secretary of the Central Committee. You will now receive a telegram from Sochi. Order immediately: first, to change all the guards in the Kremlin and on the Lubyanka, to do this, alert two battalions from the 1st Moscow Proletarian Rifle Division; the second - to take away the pass from Comrade Yagoda, to no longer let him into the NKVD building, even to receive and hand over cases; the third is to withdraw from Moscow a special company of the NKVD and disband it. And one more thing: Comrade Yagoda steals and hides young girls somewhere. They must be found and released, pointing out to Comrade Yagoda the inadmissibility of such behavior for a high-ranking communist.

Stalin hung up: - In all this story, comrade Kholovanov, I did not understand only one thing: how did the Serpent-Eater manage to steal

the suitcase? "It's simple, Comrade Stalin. The Snake Eater had a huge plywood suitcase with a disgusting look and a strong unpleasant smell. This suitcase has no bottom. The couriers' attention was diverted, at which point he covered the couriers' suitcase with his plywood. Under the handle of a plywood suitcase there is a hole covered with disheveled ropes. So

that you can take the handle and the plywood suitcase at the same time, and the one under it. The snake-eater took and carried. That's all.

7

Locks clicked, bolts banged, the door swung open. On the threshold is a small man in boots, in a green tunic with a tightly belted tunic without insignia. He stood on the threshold, smiled and introduced himself: "Hello, I'm

Yezhov." - Hello. "Comrade Streletskaia, I have come to free you. - Thank you. "They will take you home now.

Are there any claims? - No. "Then a little formality. This is a non-disclosure

agreement. Sign here and here. You will never tell anyone what

happened. - What will I tell my parents, my friends about where I am

been so many days and what did you do?

- Do not worry. We have already told everything: you helped our vigilant competent authorities to neutralize a dangerous criminal. That's all the people around need to know. No one - not teachers, not friends, not parents - has the right to ask questions. And you have no right to answer them.

- And I myself have the right to know what kind of criminal I helped to neutralize? - Yes, sure. His

name is Heinrich Yagoda. He was moved to the post of People's Commissar for Communications. But the criminal must be

arrested! When the time comes, we'll arrest you. - I'll be waiting. - The NKVD will pay you compensation

for illegal arrest. This will be presented as a cash prize for helping to capture an enemy spy. Is it coming? - It's coming.

“That's all, Comrade Streltskaia. Wish you happiness. And remember: I played an important role in your destiny. Thank you, Comrade Yezhov. If the opportunity arises, I will try to play an important role in your destiny. And they smiled at each other.

Epilogue

The snake-eater in the ward of the Kremlin hospital. His face still resembles a burgundy pillow. But the eyes were cut. It's not slits anymore. He no longer resembles the Japanese samurai from Boris Yefimov's caricatures. The whites of the eyes are completely red. Hands and feet in bandages. Instead of teeth - sharp fragments.

Next to him, in a white coat, is

Kholovanov: "Comrade Stalin ordered that you be given teeth made of Kolyma gold. You will reflect the radiance of the luminary with a smile. All girls are yours. No one can resist that smile. —

Let's see, comrade Holovanov. -

Snake-eater, don't call me Comrade Holovanov anymore. For friends, I'm a dragon. -

All right, Dragon. But don't call me Snake-Eater anymore. Not I deserve such a sonorous name.

- And why is that?

"It's immodest in the face of real serpent-eaters. The snake-eater is the one who knocks out the Chekists. How many do I have in my account? On a personal basis - five or six, no more. Well, a dozen more - according to sentences. Which one of me is Snake? But Comrade Yezhov came to the NKVD. I think it will unfold. It is Comrade Yezhov who should call himself the Serpent Eater. He will only shoot thirty, or even forty people of the center Chekists. Where can I

get to him? — Ek, enough: thirty or forty. Center!

- Remember, Dragon, my words: here it is, Yezhov Nikolai Ivanovich, and he will be a real Serpent Eater of all times and peoples. Do we argue?

— I won't argue with you, Shirmanov. Come on, I'd better tell you something, but you should leave it to yourself. Now the number of beaten and knocked out Chekists will go not to tens, not to hundreds, but to thousands. Everyone else will get it too. But there is no reason to believe that Yezhov is the coming Serpent Eater of all times and peoples. I know one leading comrade here - Serpentine in its purest form. Before him, we all turn pale, like the luminaries of heaven at sunrise. Here is the Snake. Real. To all Snake-eaters Snake-eater.

Afterword

On September 26, 1936, former member of the Politburo and former Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR Alexei Ivanovich Rykov, who succeeded Lenin as head of the government of the Soviet Union, was removed from his last post as People's Commissar of Communications of the

USSR. On the same day, September 26, 1936, Genrikh Grigoryevich Yagoda, General Commissar of State Security, was removed from the post of People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of the USSR and appointed People's Commissar of Communications of the USSR.

Before him, this damned position was occupied by: Smirnov, who was killed in the Lefortovo pre-trial detention center before the official execution of the death sentence, Lyubovich, Antipov, and Rykov, who rolled down from the very top. For all Yagoda's predecessors, the position proved fatal. After it began a rapid fall to the darkest depths. Now Yagoda has taken this position. He retained the special rank of General Commissar of State Security, he continued to wear a uniform with the appropriate insignia: on his left forearm - a sword in a laurel wreath, in blue buttonholes and on the sleeves - large gold stars. Subordinates could address him only in accordance with the charter, which he himself composed: Comrade General Commissar of State Security.

But this did not last long. On

January 27, 1937, Genrikh Grigorievich Yagoda, at the age of 45, was transferred to the reserve without the right to wear the NKVD uniform. In the title that he invented for himself, he happened to be 1 year, 1 month and 1 day. From that moment on, the People's Commissar of Communications of the USSR, Yagoda, appeared in the service in a tunic and belt, but without insignia - without blue buttonholes, a laurel wreath, a sword and stars. Now they turned to him,

naming only the position: Comrade People's Commissar. On March 28, 1937, the People's Commissar of Communications of the USSR Yagoda was arrested in his office "in view of the discovered malfeasance of a criminal nature." After a more thorough investigation, the investigation revealed the conn

Heinrich with the enemies of the people Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin, Rykov, Smirnov, as well as with the intelligence services of Germany, Japan and Poland. He was charged with organizing a conspiracy, preparing a coup d'état, participating in the assassination attempt on Lenin in 1918, preparing an assassination attempt on comrades Stalin and Yezhov, and spying for the benefit of three states at once.

On March 2, 1938, Yagoda appeared before the fairest Soviet justice in the world. Together with him, 20 more terrorists, wreckers, spies, poisoners, saboteurs were tried, including three former members of the Politburo - the former head of the Communist International Bukharin, the former Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars Rykov, the former secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party Krestinsky, against whom he fought for so many years Berry. Now it turned out that both Yagoda and those against whom he fought were members of the same gang of murderers, enemies and conspirators who deliberately and purposefully prepared to overthrow the power of the people. On March 13, 1938, a sentence was passed: 18 defendants - the highest

measure of criminal punishment, Pletnev - 25 years, Rakovsky - 20, Bessonov - 15. The most philanthropic power in the world of workers and peasants, based on

considerations of humanity, presented Yagoda, like everyone else sentenced to the highest measure, the opportunity to ask for pardon. All 18 wrote petitions, but the worker-peasant government immediately

rejected.

The sentence against Yagoda Genrikh Grigorievich was carried out in the basement of the central building of the NKVD on Lubyanka on the night of March 15 at 0:40.

The remaining 17 criminals were shot on March 15 at the Kommunarka special facility, right behind the fence of the estate where Yagoda used to live. Three enemies of

the people, who received prison sentences in this process, after the verdict, served only three and a half years. They were shot by decision of the Special Meeting of the NKVD (OSO) on September 11, 1941 in the Oryol Central. Senior Major of the State Security Bulanov Pavel Petrovich after

the removal of Yagoda remained in office under Yezhov

secretary of the NKVD and secretary of the Special Conference of the NKVD (OSO).

On November 28, 1936, for outstanding achievements in ensuring the security of our great Motherland, he was awarded the highest state award of the USSR - the Order of Lenin.

On December 5, 1936, the delegate of the Extraordinary Eighth Congress of Soviets, holder of the highest state award, Senior Major of the State Security Bulanov, together with all the other delegates, approved and adopted the new Stalin Constitution as the fundamental law of the country. From that moment, December 5 of each year was declared a non-working day, an all-Union national holiday - the Day of the Stalin Constitution. The first time it was celebrated in 1937. On March 29, 1937, the day after

Yagoda's arrest, Bulanov was arrested at the exit of a restaurant in the central building of the NKVD on Lubyanka. He was accused of preparing a coup d'état and other crimes. Bulanov was judged in the Yagoda group. Together with Yagoda, on March 13, 1938, Bulanov was sentenced to capital punishment with confiscation of property, deprivation of awards and the rank of senior major of State Security. Shot on March 15 at Kommunarka.

On December 18, 1937, the honorary Chekist, holder of the Order of Lenin, the highest state award of the USSR, head of the NKVD Dalstroy, Comrade Eduard Petrovich Berzin, in a personal red carriage of the Vladivostok-Moscow courier train, arrived in Moscow, the capital of our great motherland and the entire world proletariat, to participate in meeting of the Soviet Government on the issue of increasing gold mining in the Kolyma. He was arrested on the first platform of the Yaroslavsky (at that time - Northern) station. On August 1, 1938, the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR for treason, undermining the state industry and organizing activities aimed at overthrowing the existing system, was sentenced to capital punishment with confiscation of property, deprivation of military rank and awards. He was shot 9 minutes after the sentencing. In total, during the reign of Yagoda, there were 41 commissars in the NKVD.

State Security.

General Commissar of the State Security (equated to the Marshals of the Soviet Union) - 1.

Arrested in 1937, shot in 1938. Commissars of the State Security Service of the 1st rank (equated to commanders of the 1st rank)

- 7. In 1937, arrested: Agranov, Balitsky, Deribas, Blagonravov, Prokofiev. In

1938, arrested: Zakovsky, Redens. Of these, 2 were shot in 1937, 4 in 1938, and 1 in 1940. Commissars of the State Security Service of the 2nd rank (equated to commanders of the 2nd rank) - 13. In

1937, the following were arrested: Guy, Katsnelson, Mironov, Molchanov, Pauker, Pilyar, Shanin. In

1938, Zalin, Carlson, Leplevsky were arrested. Slutsky was killed by the First Deputy People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, Commander of the 1st Rank Frinovsky in Frinovsky's office. (Frinovsky himself was shot on February 8, 1940 in the second wave of the NKVD purge).

In 1939 Velsky was arrested. Of these, 4 were shot in 1937, 5 in 1938, 1 in 1940, and 1 in 1941. In those years, only one

commissar of the State Security Service of the 2nd rank, Goglidze, was not removed and destroyed.

Commissars GB 3rd rank (equivalent to army commanders) - 20.

Sosnovsky was arrested in 1936. In

1937, the following were arrested: Bak, Boki, Zapadny, Zirnis, Puzitsky, Rappoport, Reshetov, Rud, Styne.

Committed suicide: Mazo, Pogrebinsky. In 1938, the following were arrested: Berman, Bystrykh, Dagin, Deutsch, Nikolaev Zhurid. Karutsky

committed suicide. Lyushkov fled to Manchuria, he was killed by the Japanese in 1945. Of those arrested, 7 were shot in 1937, 4 in 1938, 1939 - 3, in 1940 - 1.

In those years, only one commissioner of the State Security Service of the 3rd rank Sumbatov-Topuridze was not removed and destroyed in those years. The reason was that Stalin, having removed Yagoda from the post of head of the NKVD and put Yezhov in this post, had already

looking for the next candidate. One of the options is Beria and the Caucasian group headed by him. 2nd rank SS commissar Goglidze and 3rd rank SS commissar Sumbatov-Topuridze are not from Yagoda's team or even Yezhov's team, they are Beria's people. In 1938, Yezhov was removed from the post of head of the NKVD, and Beria took his place. His people, including Goglidze and Sumbatov-Topuridze, rose high. But together with Beria they fell. After Stalin's death, Beria was arrested along with his closest associates. Beria and Goglidze were shot on the same day, December 23, 1953. Sumbatov-Topuridze went mad during the investigation and died in a prison-type psychiatric isolation ward. In 1937 and 1938 senior GB majors

(equivalent to army divisional commanders), GB majors (equivalent to army brigade commanders), GB captains (equivalent to army colonels) and all the subordinates got the full extent and very little more. Almost the entire generation of Chekists from the time of Yagoda was cut to the root. On December 19, 1936, the commandant's special group of the Lefortovo pre-trial

detention center in full force was dismissed from the NKVD. The further fate of the executors of sentences and their henchmen is not known to me. Shirmanov, Holovanov's deputy for dark cases, had the opportunity and means, on his own initiative, to find each of them and settle accounts with each personally, without the participation of a court or investigation. I do not exclude that it was so. But I don't have exact information.

September 13, 2010 Bristol

**In the footsteps of the heroes of Victor
Suvorov's story "The
Serpent Eater" Photo documents from the archives of the 1**

Special Application



***Genrikh Grigorievich Yagoda. People's Commissar
of Internal Affairs of the USSR from 1934 to 1936***

(Date of photography—September 18, 1936).



Genrikh Yagoda inspects the construction of the Moscow-Volga Canal named after I.V. Stalin (now the Moscow Canal), 1936.

Yagoda is accompanied by Nikita Khrushchev (on the left and behind Yagoda), Yagoda's attention to the canal is explained by the fact that during its construction it was widely used the labor of Gulag prisoners, who, according to the plan of the OGPU-NKVD, were to be corrected, "reforged by labor"



Joseph Stalin and Matvey Berman (left) inspect the construction of the Moscow-Volga canal.



A group of NKVD workers on the construction of the Moscow-Volga canal (1935).

For the construction of the canal, Dmitrovlag (Dmitlag) was created in 1932, which lasted more than five years and became one of the most grandiose correctional labor institutions in the Gulag system. Varlam Shalamov estimated the number of prisoners working here in 1933 at one million two hundred thousand people.

From September 1937 to April 1938, mass executions of convicts from Dmitlag were carried out at the "special facilities" of the NKVD in Butovo and the village of Kommunarka. According to one version, the leadership of the NKVD decided that after the construction of the canal was completed and the camp was disbanded, it would be easier and

it is cheaper to get rid of some of the prisoners than to transfer them to other camps.



View of the Yaroslavlsky railway station (from 1922 to 1955 it was called the North Station) and Komsomolskaya Square (1934).





The platform for the arrival of electric trains at the North (Yaroslavsky) station ("dacha platform"), 1932.



Lunch in the canteen of the OGPU labor commune for homeless children and juvenile delinquents in Bolshevo (1933).



Pupils of the commune at work on the manufacture of skates (1933).

*Please note that girls and boys worked and spent their leisure time
together.*



Dances to the button accordion (Ivanovo region, 1932).



Dancing in the crowd of railway workers (1935).



Mass games at the Tushino airfield (1934).



"... And no one in the world knows how to laugh and love better than us."

A shot from the film "Circus", which became a masterpiece of Soviet cinema.

In the role of Marion Dixon - Lyubov Orlova (pictured), director - Grigory Alexandrov (1936).



"Lahti" (Lahti L-35).

Finnish pistol, the only "polar pistol" in the world, designed specifically for shooting in conditions of low temperatures and possible icing. It has a very short and easy descent and low recoil (which allows for very accurate shooting), as well as an unusual unit for pistols - a bolt recoil accelerator, which ensures high reliability in any conditions. Produced in Finland until 1958.



Alexander Evgenievich Golovanov (1904–1975), who became the prototype of Alexander Holovanov (Dragon).

Alexander Golovanov, who became the prototype of Alexander Kholovanov (Dragon), was a member of Stalin's inner circle, was his confidant and executor of the most important tasks, personal bodyguard, investigator and pilot of the leader. He had the right to free access to Stalin, who called him by name as a sign of his special trust. Member of the Civil War, member of the CPSU (b) since 1929. In 1924-1933 he worked in the bodies of the OGPU, held positions

from commissioner to department head. He took part in the arrest of Boris Savinkov. Twice he went on business trips to China in 1930 and in 1931. Without

interruption from service, he became an excellent rider, motorcycle racer, and pilot; achieved the highest results in every case that he undertook.

In 1933–1941 was in the service in the Civil Air Fleet (GVF), where he was the commander of a special squadron and the chief pilot of a special squadron. In 1938, newspapers wrote about him as a "millionaire" pilot, that is, who had flown a million kilometers. He participated in the fighting at Khalkhin Gol and in the Soviet-Finnish war. In February 1942 he was appointed commander of long-range aviation; personally participated in long-range bombing raids, including the bombing of Berlin. Had the call sign "Dragon". Since 1944 - Chief Marshal of Aviation, since 1946 - Commander of Long-Range Aviation of the USSR. In 1948 he was removed from this post, in 1952 he was appointed commander of the airborne corps. In 1953, after the death of Stalin, he was sent to the reserve. For more than 10 years he worked as the head of one of the civil aviation schools.



***Flushing of gold-bearing rock at the upper mill of the
Pioneer mine***

(Yakutia, 1935).



View of the gold mines (Yakutia, 1935).



Flushing of rock in the diligent team of the Evdokievskiy mine (Buryat-Mongolian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, September 1938).

ПРИГОВОР

Военной Коллегии Верховного Суда СССР

(ОКОНЧАНИЕ)

Предварительным и судебным следствием установлено, что подсудимые по данному делу — Зеленский, Иванов и Зубарев вступили на путь борьбы с революционным движением рабочего класса еще в годы паризжа.

Зеленский состоял агентом-provokatorом Самарского жандармского управления с 1911 по 1913 год.

Иванов состоял агентом-provokatorом охранного отделения и жандармского управления в Москве и других городах с 1911 по 1916 год.

Зубарев, будучи завербован в число агентов-provokatorов в гор. Ботельнич в 1908 году, занимался provokatorской деятельностью до 1917 года.

Таким образом Военная Коллегия Верховного Суда Союза ССР установила виновность 1. Бухарина Н. И., 2. Рыкова А. И., 3. Ягоды Г. Г., 4. Крестинского Н. Н., 5. Раковского Х. Г., 6. Розенгольца А. П., 7. Иванова В. И., 8. Чернова М. А., 9. Гринько Г. Ф., 10. Зеленского И. А., 11. Бессонова С. А., 12. Икрамова А., 13. Ходжеева Ф., 14. Шаранговича В. Ф., 15. Зубарева П. Т., 16. Буланова П. П., 17. Левина Л. Г., 18. Платнова Д. Д., 19. Казакова И. Н., 20. Максимова-Дикова-

кроме того, в совершении преступлений, предусмотренных ст. 58-13 УК РСФСР.

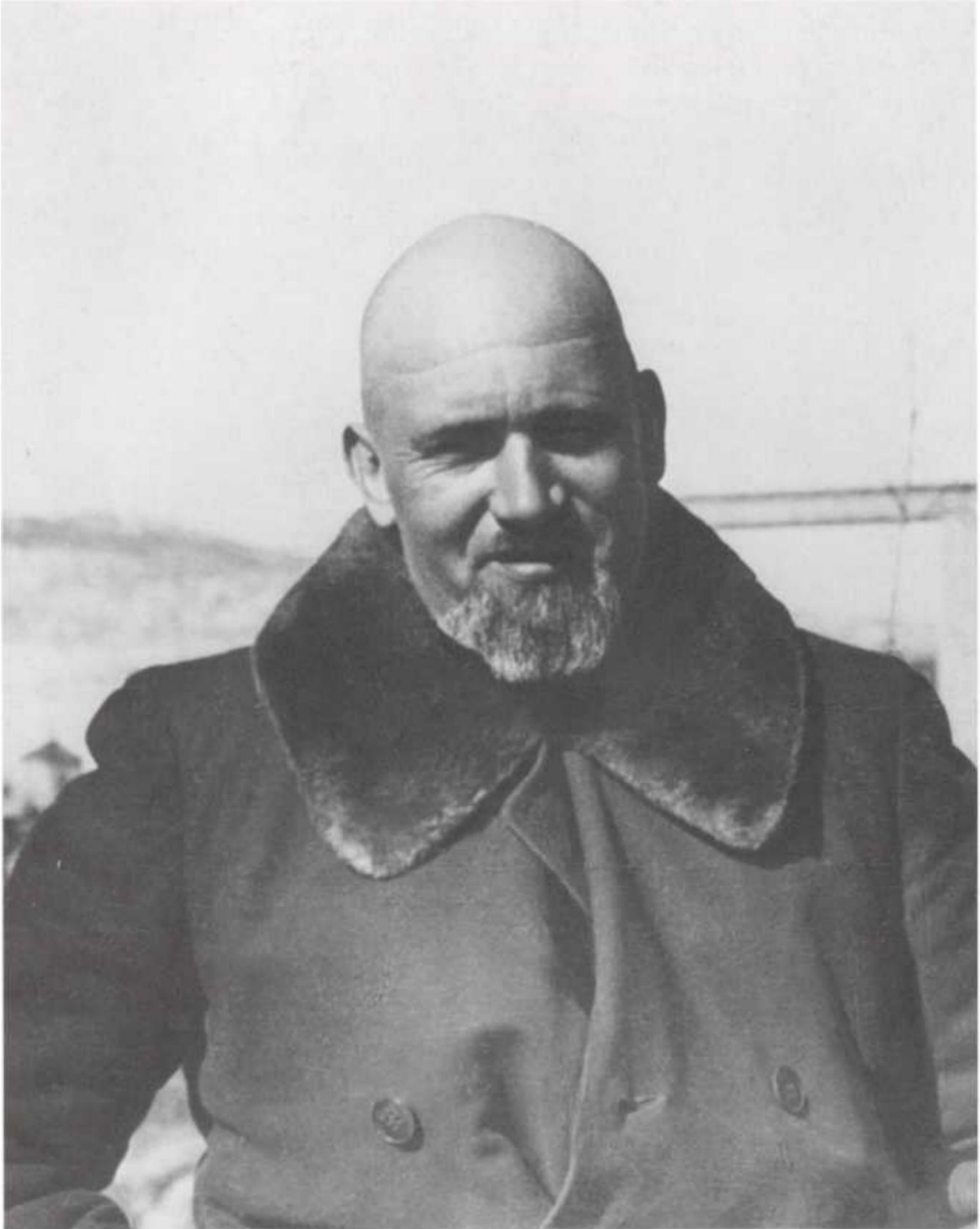
На основании изложенного и руководствуясь ст. ст. 319 и 320 УПК РСФСР, Военная Коллегия Верховного Суда Союза ССР

ПРИГОВОРИЛА:

1. Бухарина Николая Ивановича,
2. Рыкова Алексея Ивановича,
3. Ягоду Генриха Григорьевича,
4. Крестинского Николая Николаевича,
5. Розенгольца Аркадия Павловича,
6. Иванова Владимира Ивановича,
7. Чернова Михаила Александровича,
8. Гринько Григория Федоровича,
9. Зеленского Исаака Абрамовича,
10. Икрамова Акмала,
11. Ходжеева Файзуллу,
12. Шаранговича Василия Фомича,
13. Зубарева Прокопия Тимофеевича,
14. Буланова Павла Петровича,
15. Левина Льва Григорьевича,
16. Казакова Игнатия Николаевича,
17. Максимова-Дикова-Венямина Адамовича (Абрамовича) и
18. Крючкова Петра Петровича —

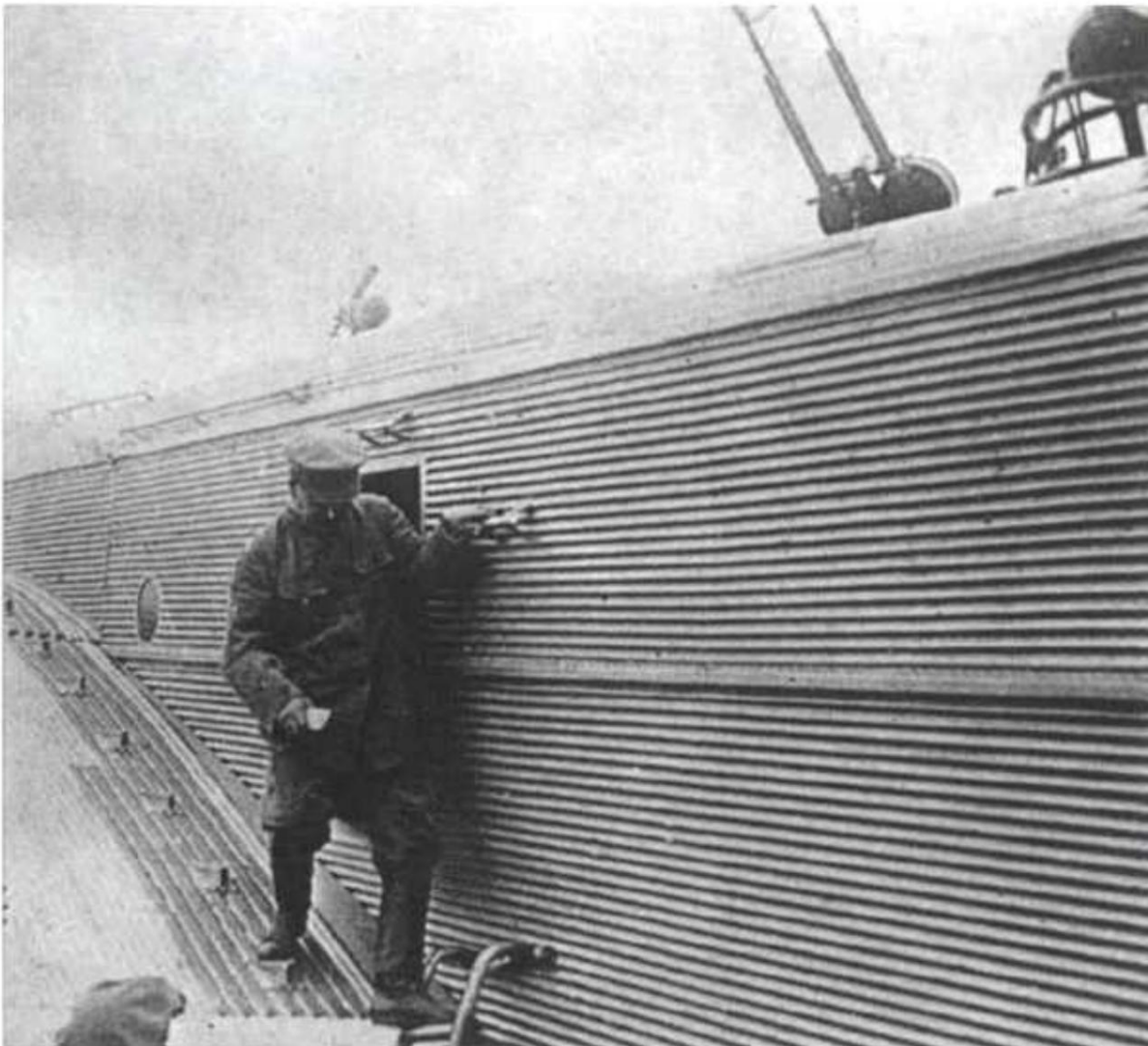
— к высшей мере уголовного наказания — расстрелу, с конфискацией всего лично им принадлежащего имущества.

**Verdict in the case of Bukharin-Rykov-Yagoda
(Pravda newspaper, March 14, 1938, fragment).**



***Head of Dalstroy NKVD Eduard Petrovich Berzin in
Kolyma.***

The picture was taken on March 1, 1934. Berzin was arrested on the first platform of the Northern (Yaroslavsky) station 18 December 1937 upon arrival in Moscow to participate in meeting of the Soviet Government on the issue of increase in gold mining in the Kolyma. August 1, 1938 Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR for treason, state undermining industry And organizational activities aimed at overthrowing existing system, was sentenced to death criminal punishment with confiscation of property, with deprivation of military rank and awards.



Joseph Stalin personally inspects the TB-3 heavy bomber.

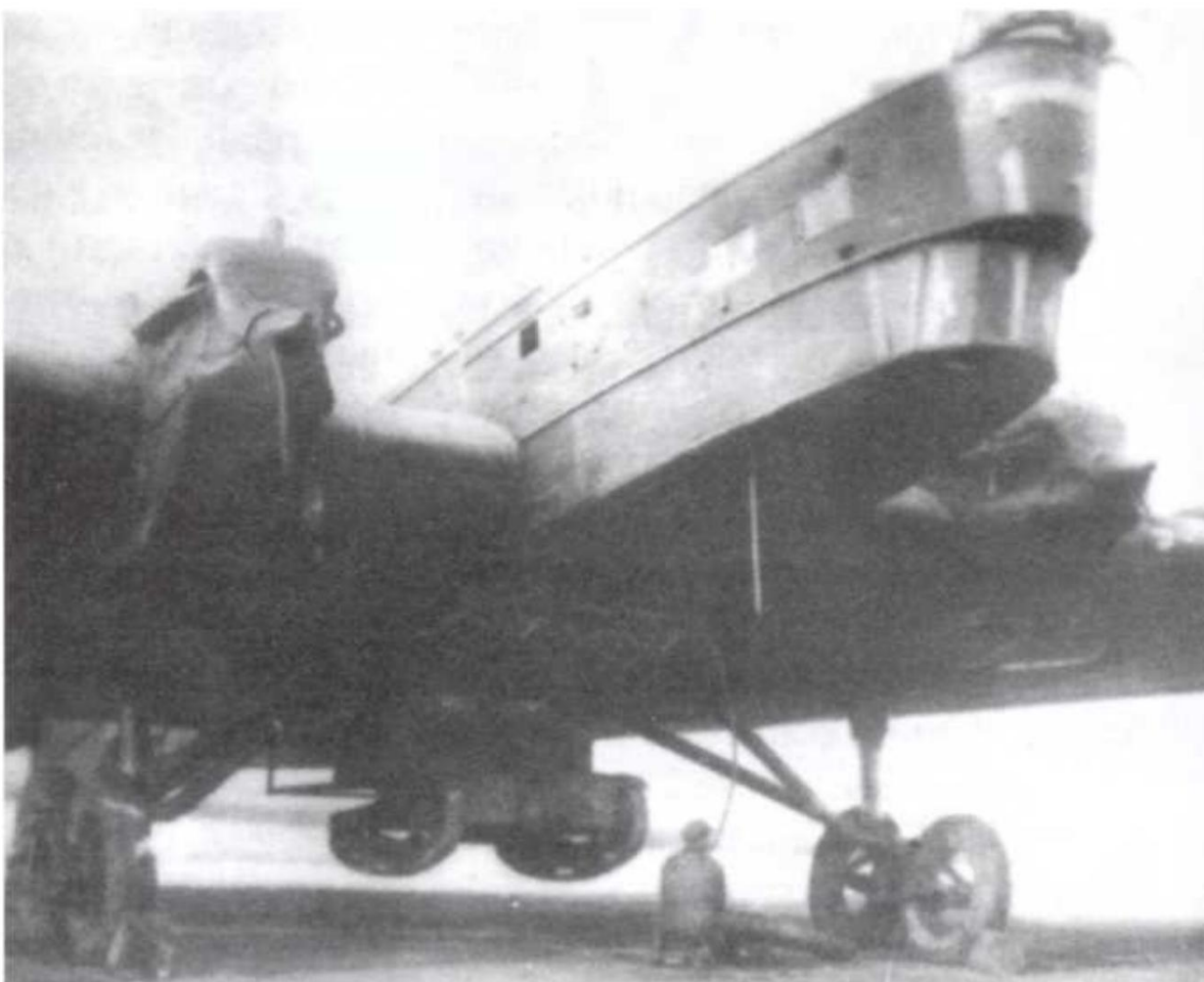


***TB-ZRN, high-altitude modification of the TB-3 bomber;
aircraft service ceiling increased to 7740 m***



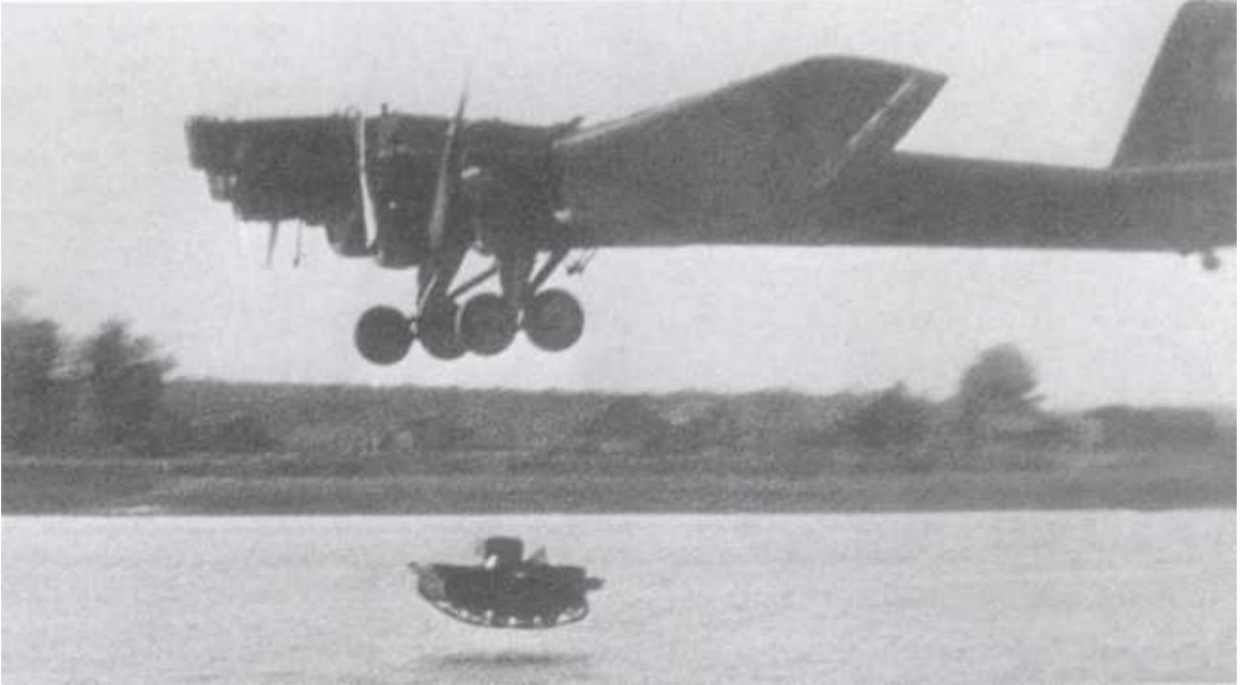
"Airplane Link"

- flying aircraft carrier "Link-SBP" (composite dive bomber) consisting of a TB-3 bomber and two I-16 fighters, suspended under the wings of TB-3 and carrying two 250-kilogram high-explosive bombs FAB-250. Flight range "Link" 2500 km, maximum speed (when the engines of all three aircraft are running) 268 km / h (1937–1938).



***A special modification of the TB-3 heavy bomber with
a suspended T-37 amphibious tank.***





Dropping a T-37A light amphibious tank into the water from a TB-3 bomber at the Bear Lakes test site, Moscow Region, 1936.



РГАКФД



Light fast tank BT-7 on caterpillar tracks (in the pictures above and below) and on wheels

A 45 mm 20K tank gun of the 1934 model and a DT machine gun coaxial with it were placed in a cylindrical turret with a developed aft niche. On some modifications, stern and anti-aircraft machine guns, 71-TK radio stations with a handrail antenna were installed. Crew - 3 people: commander, gunner, loader and driver-mechanic.



The BT-7 tanks were intended to develop a breakthrough into the depths of the enemy's defenses.

The maximum speed of the tank on the highway on wheels (in the BT-7 A modification) was 86 km/h, the cruising range was 900 km, and on tracks it was 62 km/h and 400 km, respectively. The BT-7 received its baptism of fire at Khalkhin Gol as part of the 6th and 11th tank brigades, the latter making a 500-kilometer march to the battlefield on wheels. The tank had no equal in maneuverability, it became the pride and symbol of the auto-armored troops of the Red Army in the pre-war years. The BT-7 fleet in June 1941 outnumbered the entire Wehrmacht tank fleet.



Joseph Stalin and Kliment Voroshilov (left) talking to pilots and paratroopers at the airfield in Tushino on May 02, 1935.



A test pilot lifts one of the first Soviet gyroplanes into the air. Such machines marked the beginning of the domestic helicopter industry (1932).



Stalin and the First Secretary of the Moscow City Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks Nikita Khrushchev among the pioneers at the Tushino airfield on May 16, 1937.



Stalin, accompanied by an employee of the government security department of the OGPU, who keeps his hands in the pockets of his raincoat, where weapons are hidden

(Moscow, early 1930s).



Stalin, Molotov, Voroshilov, Andreev, Yezhov, Ordzhonikidze, Mikoyan and others during the reception of the delegation of workers of the Georgian SSR in the Kremlin, March 1936. The faces of those present who were later condemned as "enemies of the people" were blacked out in the archival photograph color.



Stalin works in his office

(November 1, 1938).



Nikita Khrushchev (second from left) and Lavrenty Beria (second from right) ride in the Moscow Metro on the day of its launch on May 14, 1935.



One of the few "informal" photographs of Stalin.

The exact date and location of the shooting is not known, the photograph dates from the beginning 1930s.



***Stalin speaks at a ceremonial meeting dedicated
to the launch of the Moscow metro***

(May 14, 1935).



Stalin inspects a ZIS car produced by the Stalin Plant (ZIS, now ZIL).



Stalin among the participants of the All-Union Conference of the Wives of the Commanders of the Red Army (and such events were held in those years!), December 1936.



Stalin shakes hands with members of the delegation of women - engineering and technical workers of light industry, who were present at the All-Union Conference of the wives of the commanders of the Red Army

(December 1936).







Stalin delivers a report in the Great Hall of the Kremlin Palace (1936).

Pay attention to the expressive gestures of the leader.



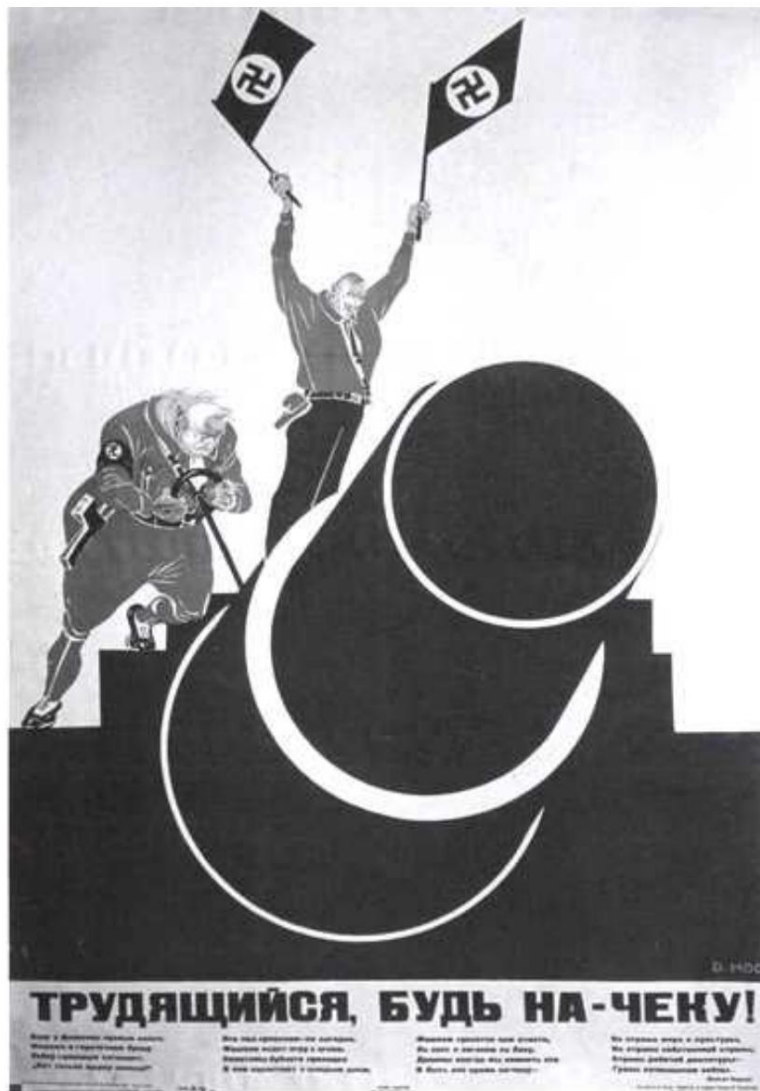
*Lavrenty Beria - Secretary of the Transcaucasian Regional Committee of the All-Union Communist
Party of Bolsheviks*

Tiflis (since 1936 - Tbilisi), 1930.



*People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of the USSR Lavrenty Beria with Stalin's
daughter Svetlana*

(September 25, 1931).



Poster D. Moor "Worker, be on the alert!"

(1936).



A poster shaming people who did not participate in the subbotnik for the construction of the subway (Moscow, 1934).



Victor Suvorov (Vladimir Bogdanovich Rezun) 2011

Viktor Suvorov about his books and about himself

I was lucky to be born in the Far East in 1947. Childhood was spent in distant and very distant garrisons - Barabash, Yanchikha, Slavyanka, again Barabash, Ryazanovka ... And there was everything a person needs for complete happiness: self-propelled guns SU-76 and SU-100, anti-aircraft guns 52-K, armored personnel carriers BTR-40, BTR-152 and even BTR-50P, M-30 and D-1 howitzers, artillery tractors, PT-76 tanks and many, many other things, including abandoned fortified areas along the entire Pacific coast.

There was a division in Barabash, and also in Slavyanka, because the schools there were large, and in Ryazanovka we had one teacher for all four classes. She was both a school principal and a cleaning lady. Both the first and second classes sat in the same room; then, on the second shift, in the same room - the third and fourth. Five or six children in each class. The teacher taught half of the lesson with the first class, the second half of the lesson with the second, and after dinner the first half of the lesson with the third class, the second

with the fourth. In September 1957, after 12 years of service in the Far East, my father was transferred to the Kiev Military District. In Konotop, we lived on Garbatnaya Street, that is, on Cannon or Artillery Street, if translated into Russian. I studied at school number 8. The first four classes are five different schools. When we were leaving Ryazanovka, the teacher tore a sheet out of her notebook and wrote a note: "Volodya Rezun received excellent marks in September in such and such subjects ..." She, of course, did not have a seal. Purely specifically: Filkin's diploma. And then the father at the headquarters assured this document with the seal of the 72nd Guards Port Arthur Order of Alexander Nevsky M

In August 1958 I entered the Voronezh Suvorov Military School. The Suvorov Schools were created by order of Comrade Stalin in 1943. Under him, there were 15 of these schools. In addition, there were two Suvorov schools of the NKVD. Those did not have scarlet shoulder straps, buttonholes and stripes, but blue ones. They were called "Arakcheevs". After Stalin, two more IEDs were created in the system of the Ministry of Defense: Leningrad and Minsk. The organization of all Suvorov military schools was personally established by Comrade Stalin: the head

schools - a major general, he has three colonels in his deputies: the first deputy, the head of the educational department and the head of the political

department. Each school has seven companies. Company commanders are lieutenant colonels, platoon commanders are majors. There were no ensigns then, there were re-enlisted men. In each company there is a foreman of the company, in each platoon there is a deputy platoon commander. That is, in each company there are four re-enlisted or warrant officers, if translated into modern concepts.

In a platoon - 25 Suvorovites, in a company - 75, in a school - 525. However, they were expelled from there mercilessly. After the first year, a small additional set was usually made. After that, the unfit were expelled, but there was no new recruitment, so there was a shortage in the schools, which in each company increased as graduation approached. During my training, the head of the Vzh SVU

was Colonel Ivanov, then Major General Dudorov. The company commander was Lieutenant Colonel Merkulov, then Lieutenant Colonel Istomin. The platoon commanders were successively Major Fedorov, Captain Dementiev, Major Stepansky, Major Panferov. For all the years, the foreman of the long-term service Chernykh was the foreman of the company, the deputy commander of the platoon was the foreman of the long-term service Uskov.

The military camp in which the school was located was built under Alexander the Third specifically for the penal battalion. The buildings are two-story, brick, built to last. In the center is a powerful building, on the ground floor of which there are several dozen solitary cells, under the ceiling there are prison windows with bars and iron shutters.

In our time, the warehouses of the school were located in these cells, from weapons to clothing and food - there were a lot of cells. And on the second floor there were huge halls. In my time, it housed a grandiose library and reading room. The library was not just grandiose, but luxurious. During the war, the Germans were on

the right side of the river - where the city lies - but they were not allowed to go to the left side. It was a suburb, its name is Privada. It was on Pridach that these same barracks were located. Before the start of the fighting - and they were the same in Voronezh

cruel, as in Stalingrad, the city library was taken to the indestructible barracks.

Until 1917, Voronezh was a merchant, industrial city, and even earlier, Peter the Great built a fleet here to enter the Azov and Black Seas. The city library was filled with books from the 19th century. The city was literally wiped off the face of the earth during the war, and the barracks on Pridacha survived, and only some buildings left traces

fragments.

After the war, the city had no time for the library - it still had nowhere to place it, so it remained in our school. Of course, no one was allowed into the main book depository, those books were not given to anyone. The exception was those individual not quite normal book lovers who on Sundays voluntarily came to disassemble, sort, sort, catalog the piles of books. The work progressed slowly, but no one was in a hurry. Almost two decades have passed since the war, and the work has not yet been completed. What happened to that treasury later, I do not know. But I suspect that the city authorities simply forgot about where they sent the library during the war. Nobody mentioned it to them.

Around the building with solitary cells and the library, all the other buildings stood in an impenetrable rectangle: headquarters, barracks, educational buildings, a canteen, two gyms, a medical unit, a bathhouse and everything else. In all other buildings, the windows were normal, high and wide, but in each window opening there were pieces of powerful steel bars from the bars, which had been sawn out, turning the penal battalion camp into a training ground for the rising military generation. The auditorium was arranged in a spacious and high battalion church, in which the bell tower was demolished, and a stage was erected in place of the altar. The schedule was strict and clear: getting up at

7:00, exercising, toilet, morning inspection, breakfast, six hours of classes, lunch, two hours of free time, two hours of compulsory self-study, dinner, an hour of optional self-study (you can learn lessons, or you can read a book). read), evening walk (that is, we are in formation with songs), evening verification and lights out.

At the age of 13, I wrote my first novel, about a mechanical cat that was used for intelligence and terrorist purposes.

It's a long-standing thing, but sometimes the devils scratch in the side with a pitchfork: but is it possible to restore the text? After

all, it was fun. They taught us well and according to a special program. In ordinary schools there are ten classes, in SVU - eleven. Exams were taken at the end of each academic year. After the exams - the camp, where the preparation continued. When they grew up, every summer - an internship in the troops: a soldier's uniform, only the boots are not tarpaulin, but bare, officer's. The schedule for the internship is army, with the rise at 6:00 and combat training without concessions and simplifications.

And my whistleblowers convict: at the age of 11 he entered the Suvorov School! That's corruption! Here it is, damn! For

greater persuasiveness, the whistleblowers should have been informed: he entered at the age of 11, and all the rest at what age ... But for some reason the whistleblowers did not specify.

For if they were told that the rest were 15-16 years old, then there would be an ambiguity: what was I doing alone among these foreheads? Did they teach me according to a special program or what? And when those foreheads were released and sent to higher military schools, what happened to me? Left to repeat the course?

So, citizens, everyone was accepted at the age of 11. So back in 1943 Comrade Stalin established it. The first company was the youngest. The next year, she was assigned the next ascending number: the company became the second, a year later - the third, and so on. The sixth company is pre-graduation, the seventh is graduation. We were enrolled in the first company after the fourth grade at the age of 11. When we were 12 years old, the company became the second, and when we were 17 - the seventh. School at 18 finished.

The cadet fraternity lived in an atmosphere of some kind of internal nobility, and I would even say - aristocracy. Scoundrels and scoundrels did not survive in that atmosphere. Our cadet collectives from St. Petersburg to Ussuriysk differed from all others. I came to school in the morning and then went home. Some come to children's correctional institutions for a short time, others for a long time; new friends and enemies appear, old ones leave. And from the first day we were pressed into a single family for seven years. And from the first day the cadets from the senior companies explained the rules of cadet behavior and stubbornly enforced them. Squealing and any other abominations were mercilessly punished.

The offense committed in the first year was always remembered. Those who did not fit into the team left on their own. Those who could not withstand the load were expelled.

There were eight people in my department when I entered. After the first year of study, Zhenya Maslov was expelled, and Vanya Sarkhoshyan was added. After the second year, Volodya Solopov was expelled. After the third, Vitya Shilov was transferred to the Kiev SVU, Sasha Slukin was expelled for health reasons. After the fourth year, Kostya Barashkin and Vanya Sarkhoshyan were kicked out. After the sixth year - Volodya Lifshits. Only two people made it to graduation - me and Sasha Yurin. Sash, hello!

We must admit that our case is not standard. But in general, the picture was as follows: they recruited 75 people in the company, a year later they added 10, after seven years they released

49 people. In 1963, the Voronezh SVU was disbanded. I was transferred to the Kalinin SVU, from which I graduated in the summer of 1965.

And again, the whistleblowers rejoice: it was arranged for him by pulls ... Let us puzzle the whistleblowers with the question: if I was transferred to another school through pulls, then what

happened to my comrades? Let's dispel the fog: in 1960, Nikita Khrushchev hit the army. It was reduced by one million two hundred thousand people. The reorganization also affected the Suvorov schools. It was decided to reduce the term of study from seven years to three. But if the term is shortened, then twice as many future officers can be trained in the same barracks and training buildings. Consequently, the number of Suvorov schools can be reduced. There were 17 of them in the system of the Ministry of Defense, they decided to leave 9. The reorganization was carried out wisely. In 1960, admission to all Suvorov military schools was stopped for three years. Therefore, in the fall of that year, six companies remained in all schools. The first companies were gone - they were not recruited. Free barracks and educational buildings appeared in each school. In the same year, the Saratov SVU was disbanded. Six of his companies were sent to other schools. At the same time, the companies did not tear apart, the established teams didn't break.

The following year, in all Suvorov schools, not only the first, but even the second companies were gone. And three schools were disbanded: Orenburg, Tula and Tambov. To our Voronezh

IEDs arrived two companies from Tula. We do not have the first and second mouths, but there are two sixths and two sevenths.

In 1962, there were no third companies in all schools. In that year, the Novocherkassk and Stavropol schools were disbanded in the same manner.

In 1963, it was our turn. The three remaining companies of the Voronezh Suvorovites were transferred to Kalinin. In the same year, admission resumed. But now they were already taking at the age of 15. We called these guys "Kutuzovites". They were glorious and correct, but from our point of view, in the system of Suvorov schools, something was forever and irretrievably lost.

In 1964, the Kuibyshev SVU was disbanded. In the same year, the company numbering system was changed. Now the company number did not reflect your seniority. He did not reflect anything - just a number. Without bending, we went from the first to the sixth inclusive, but instead of the most coveted and honorable seventh company, we suddenly ended up in the fourth. Imagine that in an ordinary school, the tenth grade would suddenly be called sixth or fifth.

During my training, Major General Kostrov was the head of the IED CI, my company commander was Lieutenant Colonel Prokhozhaev, the platoon commander was Major Toporkov, the foreman of the company was foreman of extra-long service Alferov, and the deputy platoon commander was senior sergeant Maslov.

Let's assume that I was transferred to the Kalinin SVU through blasphemy, but in order not to be bored, three more companies of my comrades were transferred along with me through the same 'pull'. And in just five years of reorganization, 2,410 Suvorov students were transferred from the eight disbanded schools to

the remaining nine. I don't know if there were once bad commanders or bad teachers in the Suvorov schools. I haven't seen anyone like this in seven years. And I keep the cadet scarlet shoulder straps with the letters "CI SVU" to this

day. After SVU, I entered the second year of the Kyiv Higher Combined Arms Command School named after Frunze twice Red Banner - he had just been transferred from Odessa to Kyiv. The history is here. There were many military schools in Kyiv. Among them - one with a very modest name KKTU - Kiev Command

technical school. Even the word "military" was not present in the title. But if the school is command, then it is clear that it is not civilian. The cadets wore tank emblems, the school was commanded by Major General of Artillery Mukhachev. And there they trained officers of the Strategic Missile Forces for service in units and formations armed with 8K63, 8K64 and 8K65 products, that is, medium-range and intercontinental-range strategic missiles. Comrade Khrushchev focused on missiles and deployed a powerful system for training command, engineering and technical personnel, but it soon became clear that the Strategic Missile Forces did not need such a number of officers. In 1965, the KKTU produced the last issue of "tankers" and was closed.

And at this time, the Odessa Higher Combined Arms Command School became crowded within its native walls. It became crowded because, in addition to Soviet officers, fighters of national liberation movements were also trained there. Now the whole world is fighting international terrorism. But before international terrorism could be fought, it had to be created. So it was created in the Soviet Union by the efforts of various organizations and departments. The Main Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff (GRU GSH) also had a hand in this important matter. The idea was simple: to rouse the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America to fight the capitalists, primarily the American ones. Then the Americans and the British took up this very important issue seriously. The idea was also very simple: to raise the Muslims against the Soviet Union. And they were raised - fed, watered, taught, supplied with weapons and

money, transferred to Afghanistan ...

Now, together, we are successfully fighting this universal evil. But the spread of this infection from our country began.

At that time, there were seven higher combined arms command schools. All of them had their own characteristics, their bias. Odessa VOKU differed from the rest in that it was under the unspoken GRU control. People from the GRU, without attracting attention to themselves, looked closely at the cadets in order to place some graduates in the future on all levels of military intelligence. Neither the cadets, nor the commanders of the lower and middle levels were supposed to know about this. Most of the graduates went on to serve in

motorized rifle and tank units and units, having nothing to do with military intelligence.

At the same time, the GRU trained in the Odessa VOKU fighters of national liberation movements, or, more simply, terrorists from the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. For them there was a special faculty. By the mid-60s, there were so many of these wrestlers that one faculty was no longer enough. Yes, and the contact of Soviet cadets with brothers in the class struggle was undesirable. Therefore, it was decided to give the entire school to the "brothers", and transfer the Soviet cadets somewhere else. Where to? Yes, here in Kyiv, a place has been vacated! So the Odessa Higher All-Arms Command School became Kyiv in the summer of 1965, located in the town, which was vacated after the dissolution of the KKTU. The cadets who arrived from Odessa were not at all happy with this turn of fate. They wrote on the walls: "Better Odessa with gonorrhea than Kyiv with

chestnuts."

At that very moment, in August 1965, I entered the Kiev VOKU. They prepared seriously. Graduated with honors. He freed Czechoslovakia from the pernicious and pernicious influence of capitalism. Upon his return, he was assigned to the 145th Guards Budapest Order of Suvorov and Bogdan Khmel'nitsky, a training motorized rifle regiment of the 66th Guards Poltava Red Banner Division of the Carpathian Military District. Appointment to the training division was in our time encouragement and promotion. In the linear parts of the platoon ceiling - the starley, the company commander - the captain. In training units, a platoon commander is a captain, a company commander is a major. And official salaries in educational units and formations were higher. My regiment was called motorized rifle, but trained sergeants for reconnaissance units and units of motorized rifle and tank divisions of the Carpathian military district and two groups of troops, Central and Southern, that is, for Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia and Hungary.

The preparations were, to put it mildly, ferocious. At that time, the main task of reconnaissance subunits and units in combat was to search for and destroy enemy nuclear weapons and their means of delivery. Reconnaissance units, having discovered a nuclear mine, a rocket battery or a 203-mm self-propelled howitzer behind enemy lines,

were obliged to report this to headquarters and attack, whatever their chances of success.

Our probable (and unlikely) opponents understood this, therefore, already in peacetime, they took measures to protect and defend especially important facilities. The Soviet Army responded to this by strengthening reconnaissance units. Previously, the PT-76 amphibious tanks were the main striking force of the reconnaissance battalions of motorized rifle and tank divisions. With me, they were replaced by T-55 and T-64.

Service in training did not seem like honey. The training division at any time, on alarm, turned into a combat division. There were enough worries. Therefore, we all had, as it were, two services at once at the same time: both the training of sergeants and the preservation of the mobilization readiness of the unit. But that's not all. After the division left on alert, the second set of weapons, military equipment, transport, ammunition and the so-called "core" (that is, a group of officers) remained in place to receive reservists and deploy the division of the second formation. During my service, I had to visit both the first staff and the core. I quickly became

convinced that our native government does not pay money to anyone in vain and does not indulge in military ranks for free. The service was complicated not least by the lack of command personnel. Officers were constantly taken from the division on long foreign business trips - to Cuba, to Egypt, to Syria, to Vietnam, and God knows where else. But there was an order from the Minister of Defense: not to occupy the positions of those who had gone on long business trips. Positions remained vacant, but someone had to perform the work for those who had left. In my battalion, for example, there was no chief of staff - he fought in Africa, and they could not send a new one to this place. Therefore, the commander of the first company temporarily (three years) performed his duties. But if there is no company commander in place, the commander of the first platoon worked for him. And there was no head of intelligence in the regiment. For the same reason. Therefore,

one company commander performed his duties ... The training course for sergeants was six months. Recruits were received in echelons and six months later, having assigned badges by order of the division commander, they were sent to the troops. Passed the exams - junior sergeant, passed the "excellent"

essentially to suicidal actions, but the death of the reconnaissance groups ensured the survival of the main forces.

In the 66th Guards Training Motorized Rifle Division, I made four excellent graduations. The next rung on the career ladder is the intelligence department of the headquarters of the Volga Military District. Kuibyshev was the secret reserve capital of the Soviet Union. The headquarters of the district is on the banks of the Volga, and behind it is a grandiose square. They say one of the largest in Europe, if not in the world. Under that square, as we all now know, there was a secret command post of Comrade Stalin, in comparison with which the command posts of Hitler and Churchill look very neither solid nor serious.

By the way, about Churchill. Let's hear how the British pronounce this name. In my opinion, this name sounds "yo". In vain we forget this letter, in vain we throw it out of the language. Our language has already been impoverished in recent decades. And in this letter there is so much softness and tenderness, which is so lacking in our callous souls.

And if we are already talking about this beautiful letter, then let's think about why our good people strive all the time to dot the "i", which do not need to be dotted at all. And why are our people in no hurry to dot the "e"? I cannot explain such things except by the properties of the mysterious Russian soul.

But back to the spare capital.

Under Khrushchev and Brezhnev, Kuibyshev's role as the country's secret reserve capital was preserved. Therefore, the headquarters of the Volga Military District secretly carried an additional load - in the event of an aggravation of the international situation, reserve command posts of the Headquarters of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief and the General Staff, as well as a strategic communications center, were deployed here. In the corridor of the intelligence department of the headquarters of the Volga Military District, fate confronted me with the one whom I mentioned in the Aquarium in just one line - with a ringing girl from the

control group. After a year of service in this headquarters - three years of the Military Diplomatic Academy of the Soviet Army, four years of work in undercover production

and departure. Whistleblowers are looking for - and finding - inconsistencies in the biographies of Viktor Suvorov and Vladimir Rezun.

You are trying in vain, citizens - there should not have been any correspondence. If I were to accurately name names, places and dates, it would be meanness towards my comrades, colleagues and commanders. Therefore, I shifted the narrative in place and time, changed the names. In my books, I quite consciously worked "for a fall."

In the "Liberator" and "Aquarium" Viktor Suvorov is a collective farm driver who sells watermelons in the market and poisons the Dnieper with poisonous abomination, and Vladimir Rezun was trained in special military educational institutions from the age of 11.

Viktor Suvorov entered the first year of the Kharkov Guards Tank Command School, and Vladimir Rezun immediately entered the second year of the Kyiv Frunze Higher Combined Arms Command School twice Red Banner. Viktor Suvorov served in the headquarters of the Carpathian military district, and

Vladimir Rezun served in the headquarters of the Volga, in the secret reserve capital of the Soviet Union. Viktor Suvorov got into the nomenclature of the Central Committee as a senior

lieutenant, and quick Rezun - as a lieutenant, breaking all records. In "Aquarium" I mentioned in one line the sonorous girl from

control groups, but in the life of Rezun, this was not the end of the matter.

All graduates of the First Faculty of the Military Diplomatic Academy are entitled to at least one more year of training in various departments of the GRU. Victor Suvorov also passed that year, and in real life I got to combat work abroad the very first of the entire graduation, bypassing this year of additional training.

Viktor Suvorov worked in Vienna - in the second most important center of world espionage, and Rezun - in Geneva, in the first center, in the main his capital.

In the Aquarium I have one Navigator, but in real life there have been three residents: two are smart, the third is not very. When, a few years after all that had happened, this third one died, no one from the GRU came to bury him, although he was a major general. Everyone hated him fiercely - both bosses and subordinates. He earned striped trousers only because his brother was an assistant to Comrade Brezhnev. This smart guy in general's pants grew up in the high offices of Moscow, and his first position abroad, the highest of all

possible, - GRU resident in Geneva. He failed everything that could be failed. I didn't ruin my book with his image. And he never explained the real reasons for leaving. Viktor Suvorov fled alone and from Austria, Vladimir Rezun - with his wife and small children and from Switzerland. What **am I** to? To the fact that both "Tales of the Liberator" and "Aquarium" were written and published during the time of comrades Brezhnev and Andropov, when the union of the indestructible free republics was great and powerful, when few believed that it would soon be gone. "Aquarium" is not about me, not about my adventures, but about how military intelligence works from the battalion and above, to the most important residencies. And I had two ways. First: call

everyone with whom it fell to serve by name, and break many destinies. Second: change all the names,

starting with your own, move the action in time and space. He showed particular caution when it came to agents. Please note that after my departure there was not a single spy process. Nobody was arrested or convicted. Maybe he didn't work well and didn't know anything? Someone who does not work well in strategic

undercover intelligence is expelled after the first year. I served the full term of the business trip, all three years. As an exception, he was left for the fourth year, as a special exception - for the fifth.

In order not to cause inconvenience to anyone, he introduced himself by a false name and decided never to reveal his pseudonym. I was first discovered by the head of the GRU, Colonel-General E.L.

Timokhin: ***The pseudonym "Suvorov" was taken by former Major Rezun Vladimir Bogdanovich*** ("Red Star", April 29,

1992). And now the critics reproach me: I should have turned in everyone I knew! It was necessary to call everyone by their real names, accurately tie the action to the place and time, so that it would be easy to figure out not only those who were nearby, but also those who were

far away! And it was necessary to reveal the appearances, names, passwords! It was especially fitting and bright to highlight the foreign agents, so that everyone was tied up and imprisoned!

Thank you for your advice, dear comrades. But in this life I only go the path that he chose. Now about the main thing. What is the most important thing for me?

The main thing is "Icebreaker". In the Soviet Union, the study of the Great Patriotic War was banned and persecuted. Sincere songs about the war to sing - this is please. To make an ugly woman in Stalingrad is not a pity for money. And the fact that the concrete would crack in a couple of decades and the statue on the man-made mound would inevitably tilt and sag — nobody cared. Give the budget now, and let future generations solve problems. So: our native state erected cyclopean idols on mounds, did not spare money for that, in order to spur patriotism (and cut the budget), and access to the archives of the war years was tightly closed. This is what got my attention. The war seems to be the Great, it seems to be the Patriotic War, but it's not recommended to delve into the details. Something is hidden there. Interesting, what exactly? I am sitting at a lecture at the academy, the hardened wolf of undercover production explains to me what signs a scout should look for in order to determine whether the adversary is preparing an attack or not. Among these signs: the enemy is pulling headquarters and command posts, communication centers and strategic reserves of fuel, ammunition and engineering equipment to the border, deploying an airfield network ... And the next lecture is given by another colonel about our blatant stupidity in 1941: Stalin's generals and marshals, who did not understand anything, pulled up to the border headquarters and command posts, communication centers and strategic reserves of fuel, ammunition and engineering equipment, deployed an airfield network. At the same time, 254 airfields were built in the western regions of the country! Yes, with concrete strips! They brought fuel, food, bombs, dug up dugouts, set up tents, the Germans came to everything ready: tons of potatoes in warehouses, cabbage in barrels, bandages in the medical unit, even Soviet bombs fit the Germans, it's one hell of a plane, what kind of bombs are hung under it . If there weren't these airfields, the German pilots wouldn't have such expanse in our sky, especially in the mud.

And we all laughed at the stupidity of Comrade Stalin and his generals. The whole world is laughing at us to this day. And you don't have to laugh.

Those airfields were not prepared for Hitler and his aces, but for a sudden attack on Hitler. And there is nothing shameful in that. It's

Hitler! You do

not need seven spans in your forehead to figure out: Stalin was preparing an attack. And having understood this, you can take any aspect of preparing the country for war, and we will see evidence of this simple assumption with the naked eye. In peacetime, partisan detachments were prepared - they were dispersed right before the war. Why? Yes, because they were preparing to fight on foreign territory. They prepared an incredible number of paratroopers, who are not needed at all in a defensive war. For what? Yes all then

same.

I did not consider many issues in my books - the topic is inexhaustible. But take any incomprehensible question, and the Icebreaker, like a golden key, will open the answer to you. But they tell me: in

real science, they act differently - they collect facts, analyze them, then draw conclusions. And you have the opposite: first you made a conclusion, and then you click any facts like nuts with this conclusion. This is not a scientific approach! This is not really a scientific approach. This

is a reconnaissance approach - to truncate some petty oddity, some trifle. Here is a broken branch on the path. Why would suddenly? Find an explanation for this strange fact, and only then everything else will become clear. By the way, not only intelligence operates this way. Have you read books about Sherlock Holmes? Here! This same Holmes also paid attention to some strange specks, blades of grass and specks, found logic in things that at first glance were illogical, and then all other facts became

understandable.

A military intelligence analyst works as an investigator. No one will reveal the logic of events to him. That is his job to find this logic. And no one will open the safes in front of the scout. By the way, and before the historian - too. Therefore, the historian and intelligence officer are related professions. Their task is to penetrate the vaults of secrets. And if you can't get access to the papers, then it remains only to figure out those secrets that are hidden in safes and vaults. Comprehension of the mysteries of history is exploration of the past. And the historian needs no less courage. Risks

he lives like a scout: after all, they can tear off his head. Or something else.

But if you delve deeper, you will have to agree: there are an innumerable number of methods in science. The main thing is that they bring us closer to the truth. Here is an example: a researcher found a bone of an unknown antediluvian beast, figured out what part of the skeleton this bone belongs to, what bones should be adjacent to it, what shape, what size they should be. With only one bone in front of him, the man restored the entire skeleton from the thousands of missing bones. He "calculated" them! A hundred years later, almost a whole skeleton of the same dinosaur was found, compared with the reconstruction of a hundred years ago, they were amazed at the accuracy, they took off their hats as a

sign of respect. This is what real science is. They tell me: you write about the war, but where are the supporting documents? I answer: dinosaurs did not leave any documents behind them. Only bones. Is this enough to doubt their existence? Here's a closer example. US President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. Someone planned the murder. But where is the document? There is no document. Does it follow from this that the

murder was committed without any preparation? "Icebreaker" I sat down to write the very first night after leaving. I thought I would fit into one article. I wrote it, but realized that to understand it, I need to write two more explanatory articles, and to understand them, four more. Articles multiplied, turning into chapters, but I had to live on something. It was necessary, without stopping work on the main theme, to bring another to the fore. In a few months he wrote "Tales of the Liberator". To do this, it was not necessary to compile card indexes, collect anew information about divisions and corps, about generals and marshals, re-read the book

"Tales of the Liberator" - about how I was a cadet, how I sat in the guardhouse, how I cleaned the generals' toilets, how I became an officer, how I liberated a fraternal country that strove to turn off the right path. Finding

a literary agent, a publisher, a translator, proofreading a translation, editing - all this takes time, patience and nerves. The book was published only in 1981. The publisher insisted that it be published under my real name.

In this case, the book is guaranteed to become a bestseller. There were all conditions for this: in neutral Switzerland, the Soviet diplomat Vladimir Rezun disappeared with his wife and two children. A diplomat is

not a private person, but an official representative of his country. The disappearance of a diplomat of any rank is a sensation. The Cold War is in full swing. The two superpowers oppose each other all over the world from Cuba and Chile to Egypt and Syria, from Indonesia and Vietnam to Czechoslovakia and Germany. At any moment, an aggravation can occur with an unpredictable outcome for all of humanity. This has happened more than once. And negotiations on nuclear charges and their means of delivery, on submarines and missile defense, on tanks and guns, are being held in Geneva, within the walls of the Permanent Mission of the USSR to the UN Office.

And now, not just a diplomat from some embassy, but a diplomat from this same Permanent Mission of the USSR disappeared. And the Foreign Office[2] states that the fugitive diplomat has been granted asylum in the UK. Radio, television, the press are eager and ready: here are the front pages of newspapers, here are the covers of photographic magazines, here is the airtime in the news bulletins. But the fugitive is silent. In the press - the most incredible version of what happened. Everyone is looking for an explanation why there are no public speaking with denunciations and revelations. There are suggestions that diplomacy for Rezun was only a cover for some secret activity. It's even more interesting. Even a timid version appeared in the press: is he from the GRU? There are many defectors from the KGB. And the last time a person escaped from the GRU was 32 years ago, in

1946. In addition, Colonel Penkovsky was from the GRU. But he didn't run away. If this one is from the GRU, then ... The publishers turn to the Foreign Office - here are the contracts, they are ready to buy a book if he decides to write it. We pay now, we pay abundantly, no matter what will be in that book, the main thing is sooner, and that the author's name should be on the cover: Vladimir Rezun!

But I never appeared on the screens or on the front pages of newspapers. Never. Vladimir Rezun disappeared forever. I decided to make my way into literature not on the crest of a cheap sensation, but, so to speak, "on a general basis", and to find the way to the reader not by the name on the cover, but by the content of the books. Therefore, I started from scratch: here is a book by an author whom no one knows. It turned out to be very difficult to break through. After many

attempts, finally found a publisher who decided to publish a book by an unknown author about the Soviet Army. And one day he asked me: are you, by any chance, not Rezun? And, having learned that this was so, he rejoiced: yes, we are now under our real name! Yes, we will present the bestseller to the world! But I did not want to cause trouble to anyone, so I firmly decided - only under a pseudonym. But if so, then the advance payment will be scanty, the circulation will be as it turns out, there are no guarantees of success.

I stood my ground: only under a pseudonym. Then the question arose: under what? The publisher says: there should be something Russian, preferably in three syllables, and somehow connected with the army, but so that the reader does not know exactly how it is connected. I heard something somewhere, but I'm not sure.

I say: Kalashnikov! Him: No, we know that. Yes, four syllables. In short it is necessary. I told him: Suvorov. And who is this? he asks. Yes it was, I answer. So we decided. I thought I'd

joke once, and then I'd come up with something serious. Anyway, my opuses will never reach the Soviet Union, but here, in Britain, they know no more about Suvorov than about the brilliant commander Viscount de Turenne, Marshal of France. And then one wise whistleblower took me away: write under your own name or under a

pseudonym, the fee is the same anyway! Here it is, proof: you do not write books yourself! Dear man, I chose a pseudonym only for the first book - for the one about the Kyiv guardhouse. Valera Simonov, my good friend at the

Kyiv Higher Combined Arms Command School, and later the head of army intelligence, here

what wrote:

Personally, while reading the book "The Liberator", I was amazed at the accuracy with which the author depicted the Kyiv garrison guardhouse. Frankly, I myself had to sit there for a total of more than fifty days.

("Moskovskaya Pravda", July 31, 1994).

But if you believe not my friend, who was an order of magnitude more than mine, who served time there, but the whistleblower, then it turns out that a Russian person (with Ukrainian roots), who was there and went through it,

I am not able to tell about my impressions, and only the wise Britons, who were not there, who did not clean the generals' toilets, were able to describe all this for me. It is not otherwise that the accuracy of the narration was achieved not by me, but by the ubiquitous British intelligence that penetrated those toilets.

And the name on the cover, citizen whistleblower, is not the last thing. Write under your name - some fees, under a pseudonym - completely different. Only those who have never dealt with the publishing world can not understand this. So: the name of the author (real or pseudonym) is often more important than the content. In my case, the situation looked simple. There was a great superpower in the world called
the Soviet Union. The leaders of the superpower taught
everyone how to live, imposing their order with tanks, but in their own country they could not provide the population with clothes and shoes. The superpower flooded the world with T-54 tanks, Vladimirov machine guns and Kalashnikov assault rifles, S-75 missiles and RPG-7 grenade launchers for free,
but was unable to feed itself.

The superpower helped everyone, from Angola and Ethiopia to Mozambique and Libya. But this superpower was unable to build housing for its officers. The superpower was the first to pave the way into
space, but could not provide its schools with warm toilets, and maternity hospitals with hot water. For the sake of the victory of communism in Cuba, the superpower almost

plunged the world into a nuclear catastrophe.

The superpower kept its breadwinners on collective farms, not giving them internal passports so that they would not run away, and waged a stubborn struggle for the freedom of the oppressed peoples of Asia and Africa.

The superpower did not pay money to its peasants, and if it later began to pay, then it was impossible to buy anything with this money. And the same superpower every year exported hundreds of tons of gold to America in exchange for grain: let the American farmer be rich and happy, let him buy a house, a car and a tractor. The superpower waged a deadly struggle against capitalism,

declaring to the whole world through the mouth of his leader: we will bury you!

But if the superpower buries the damned capitalists, then who will feed it?
So: an officer fled from

the General Staff of this superpower. And he wrote a book about the Soviet Army. Imagine a publisher announcing: here is his real name, here is a photograph, here is a biography. In this case, the interest is guaranteed. The success of the book in those years, in that environment, depended only on the name on the cover.

And here is another situation. The same book about the Soviet Army comes out. But the only thing known about the author is that his name is, for example, Alexander Sergeevich Makedonsky. Both the reader and critics of such a book, of course, will be treated with distrust. And there is no guarantee of success in this case. That's why the advance is thin.

I wanted the book to be judged not by the name on the cover, but by content.

And she was appreciated. And it became a bestseller. After that, the situation reversed. Now the reader wants new books with this strange name on the cover. Ask a publisher to write under a different pseudonym, or even under his real name, and he no longer agrees. While *The Liberator* was being translated, while they were preparing for publication—and this is a long and dreary business—I composed the second book. He came up with a new pseudonym, but the publisher cut him off: it's too late, brother, you are now famous under the pseudonym Suvorov.

The second book was called "Soviet Army: Problems and Solutions". The publisher rejected the title. The book was published under the title "Inside the Soviet Army" ("In the Soviet Army"). This book was about the simplest things: about the advantages of a boot over a boot, about why Soviet battalions are not always commanded by lieutenant colonels, but there are also majors, otherwise and captains. I explained the most basic things.

They laughed at us then. The Russians have a caliber of 76 mm. They had anti-aircraft, and ship, and tank, and regimental, and divisional guns of this caliber. And they, stupid, for some reason invented a new caliber for the LNG-9 - 73 mm. They have a caliber of 122 mm - this is a howitzer, and a tank gun, and a self-propelled gun based on the IS-2, and a corps gun. And for some reason they create a self-propelled howitzer of the same caliber 122 mm, and for tanks they invented a new caliber - 125 mm! Where is the standardization? Where

logics? Stupidity, and nothing more. And laughter echoed on both sides of the

Atlantic. I explained in the book on this and other examples: no, gentlemen, everything here is correct, everything is logical. It's your mom's bad kids. You have to think: in West Germany, a 120 mm mortar and a 120 mm tank gun. But the shells of a tank gun are not suitable for a mortar. So why do you need such standardization? It only creates confusion. In battle, under the roar of cannonade, you need to order ammunition of such and such a caliber, and then yell into the handset what exactly is meant. I wrote this book for

military people, proving the only idea: we should not be considered fools, no worse than you, gentlemen. For some reason, this book began to be bought not only by the military, but also by students, pensioners, schoolchildren, and housewives. The book became not just a bestseller, but the "book of the month" in the United States. This allowed me to pay off all my debts in one fell swoop and buy a house with a marble fireplace. Now it was possible to do nothing at all for the rest of your life or do only what you like. And I like to write books. After that there was "Aquarium", "Control", there were other books.

A separate topic is the long-suffering book "Spetsnaz".

Why was it written? I answer: many things in our native Fatherland are done differently from people. I don't know how to delicately express it... In a word, much, if not all, is done in our heads. Officially, our identity is called the beautiful term "special path of development."

In accordance with the "special way" - when done not through head - we got the largest territory on the planet.

And running wild, drinking too much, degrading, indifferent to everything, including to their own destiny, a dying people.

Let us turn to Vereshchagin's stunning canvases Mortally Wounded, Attacked by Surprise, After Success, Presenting Trophies. We see a monstrous war in Turkestan, a brutal massacre, defeated enemies and severed Russian heads. By the way, we didn't go through this in history lessons, they didn't ask us this.

Why do we need Turkestan? And why should those victories be paid for with cut off Russian heads? We did not have enough space on earth?

Let us turn to the great Russian literature. The entire 19th century was a war in the Caucasus. Many of our classics wrote about her, from Lermontov to Tolstoy. And why did they fight for decades?

They say: we are not alone. The Spaniards did the same, and the Portuguese, British and French, then the Germans pulled themselves up, Belgium and Holland did not lag behind. Right. But having conquered vast territories, the colonialists used the natural and human resources of the new lands to their advantage. And we, having annexed the neighboring states, following the "special path", immediately began to pay tribute to the local kings. Where is

the money to get to feed this army? As where?

Tear off five skins from a Russian peasant. So it was under the tsars, so it was under the general secretaries: all sorts of Uzbek and Turkmen, Georgian and Azerbaijani chiefs lived in royal luxury, received unprecedented subsidies, without bringing any benefit to the people who conquered them. And the guys in the Kremlin were not

enough. They were impatient to cut more land, to pay more tribute to new freeloaders. In expanding the possessions of the Soviet Union, the Main Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff (GRU GSh) and its shock units, Spetsnaz, played an important role. From the moment of creation and almost until the very collapse of

the Soviet Union, this term was secret. Spetsnaz was only in the hands of military intelligence. It is now a variety of "special forces" divorced in abundance. And then there was no need to clarify: if Spetsnaz means GRU Spetsnaz.

Very few people knew about the existence of the GRU itself. In Georgia, cars went with GRU license plates, and this did not surprise anyone. By the way, that is why Stirlitz in "Seventeen Moments of Spring" sees off Pastor Schlag in a car with a Soviet license plate - white on black in Russian letters: "21-47 GRU". This happened because the liberators of Europe in 1945 brought trophies from Germany, and then for some reason the trophies settled in the Caucasus. For the filming of films, German cars from the war times were rented from wealthy Caucasian owners, being too lazy to change numbers in front of the camera. But let's not digress.

The idea of creating special forces units of the GRU was this: let's select the best human material - not just the most physically healthy, hardy and strong, but also - and this is the main thing - smart, capable, developed, we will create powerful combat formations from them and throw them on capture all new lands! And having captured the territories of our neighbors, we will impose a new dues on the Russian people and we will pay tribute to the conquered! And everyone will be fine! And let all the new princes and kings build palaces for themselves and their servants with our money, let them keep harems, buy world football stars for their regional teams and invite Hollywood luminaries to celebrate their little anniversaries. And the whole world will look at the map with a shudder, see the largest territory and consider us the strongest!

I am a principled opponent of the transformation of the Russian people into a breadwinner and a donor of idlers and freeloaders, I am against the payment of tribute, I am against the seizure of more and more unnecessary lands and payment for these

seizures with Russian heads. Spetsnaz are the best combat units of the Soviet Army, but these units were designed to solve problems that are directly opposed to the interests of the Russian people. That is why I informed not just anyone, but the whole world about the existence, structure, weapons and tactics of this flexible, strong, cunning and ferocious beast that I love. And conscience does not gnaw. I acted in the interests of the Russian people as I understand these interests. We do not need the Turkish coast, and we do not need Africa! And there is no need for us to feed the parasites, especially if we cannot even provide our officers with housing, and our old people with a decent pension.

I wrote a book, gave it to a British publisher, who sniffed and puffed for a long, long time, not daring to publish it. In Germany, the same story: for some reason the book never came out. And then all of a sudden she suddenly came out in London. I opened it and was shocked. The text of the book has been mercilessly cut. I went to the publisher, and he explains: you got it too long, and why talk about this and that, why, in spite of political correctness, climb into some depths?

The main blow of the long censor's scissors fell on the psychology of a fighter, on the methods of survival in extreme conditions,

on the tactics of military operations, on the methods of obtaining (or rather, knocking out) intelligence information.

Immediately all the problems were gone and the German publisher. He immediately published the book, but translated from English, even left the same cover: it was more convenient for us.

At this time, a powerful wave of protests was rising in Poland, Samizdat flourished. I had no connection with the underground Polish publishers, and they could not find me. Therefore, without asking me, Polish underground publishers translated this book from German ...

There were many Russian publishing houses outside the borders of the Soviet Union, I went to them: gentlemen, citizens, they publish the book in a tormented form, but here is my full version, take it for free, just let the whole text

come out! There were no brave ones. Neither the full text, nor even castrated. The book has never been published in Russian.

Then the Soviet Union collapsed. And at once they all grew bolder: come on! What for? To find out the tasks of the Special Forces units of the Western Group of Forces in the upcoming battles with NATO troops? So after all, there is no longer any Western group, and there is no German Democratic Republic, on whose territory the armies, corps and divisions of the Western Group of Forces were located. There are no more Central, Southern or Northern Groups of Forces. There are now sovereign states, and all of them are no longer our brothers. There is no longer any Carpathian, or Baltic, or Belarusian, or Kyiv, or Odessa military districts. But the district is a group of armies! Each district had a Special Forces brigade. In addition, each combined arms and tank army has its own separate special forces company. But everything collapsed. If the book

had been published in full before the collapse of the Soviet Union, now one could say: this is the very first thing that was published on this issue, do not judge strictly, it was not an angel of God who wrote, but a man full of ignorance. But if it did not work out then, now there is

no point in returning to the past. Moreover, in one question I was deeply mistaken. I predicted that the Soviet Army would never leave Afghanistan. It was the greatest stupidity to send troops into Afghanistan, but to withdraw them was suicide. That's really true: the entrance is a ruble, the exit is two.

After all, everyone understood: if the troops were withdrawn from Afghanistan, the Soviet Union would collapse instantly. That's why I

thought: they won't leave there. But they left. And exactly six months later the socialist camp collapsed. From August to December 1989, the entire "camp" disintegrated. And a year and a half later, the Soviet Union itself.

During my service, units of the Special Forces of the GRU did not fire a single shot in the war. And after my departure, they did not leave the battle for a single day. Therefore, I have no moral right to write anything about them now.

The versions of Spetsnaz that are circulating on the Web are an evil and illiterate translation from Polish, which is a loose translation from German, which is a translation from English, which is a bad translation from a jagged, twisted, incomplete Russian original.

In the text from the Web, take the very first phrase about some kind of "blades". The translator obviously tried to humiliate and shame our nice guys, to present the matter in such a way that all this is not serious, that it is about something like a sandbox on a playground.

But there are no blades in parts of the Special Forces! The tool, which people who did not serve in the army unknowingly call the "sapper shovel", has a different name - a small infantry shovel.

The rest of the text in the same vein is illiterate! I have nothing to do with these writings. I ask for them not to judge.

In 1985 I completed Icebreaker. There are many publishers here, but it was not possible to publish the book. I have published several fragments in the newspaper Russkaya Mysl, in the journal Continent, and in the journal of the Royal United Services Institute for Defense and Security Studies. I searched hard for a publisher. In the meantime, work on the book continued. Added new chapters, rewrote old ones. The book was first published in German in 1989, and in English in 1990. In Russian abroad, "Icebreaker" never came out. Some were taken, and then they said that it would be necessary to change the style. And then some is not scientific. I told them: but I don't need a scientific one. Who do we write books for? That's right - for the people. So let's write in the language that
our

people understand and understand. It is not necessary to write in the language of the mind. Any academician is capable of writing in a learned language. But you try to write in such a way that it would be interesting for schoolchildren, and housewives, and soldiers, and officers,

and lumberjacks, and musicians. Quite deliberately, I did not begin to prove my theory on the academic field, did not begin to argue with our highbrow and wise. I wrote in such a way that my thought reached the broad masses of the people, and let them ask high-browed questions and demand an answer.

Meanwhile, the so-called "glasnost" was raging in the Soviet Union, under the cover of which archival documents were destroyed by the ton. The magazine "Neva" published "Aquarium" and turned to me: give me something else! **I told** them: you won't print it. And they: come on, we have freedom of speech. I gave them the Icebreaker, and there was silence. I call in a month: how is it? They answer that it's great, but there is no date for which the publication could be timed. Months go by, the date approaches: the fiftieth anniversary of the start of the Great Patriotic War! I call: so how? You understand, they answer, we cannot offend veterans by such a date. After that, everything froze again. The reason is

the same: there is no date to coincide with. And if you just publish it, then who will read it? So no one dared, even after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Dubov Sergey Leonidovich undertook to publish "Icebreaker". I doubted: what should be

the circulation? The man was cautious, did not like to take risks, so at first he made a timid entry - only 320 thousand. Then I realized that it was not enough, and while a trial edition was being printed, I added the first million.

And I have a basket full of other books. Until I started writing Icebreaker, I thought that I would get by with one big article. After many years it became clear that one book is not enough. In order to explain some points in the Icebreaker, I had to write M-Day and The Last Republic, and The Last Republic, in turn, stretched into three books.

I had to develop and parallel themes that arose along the way. I was told: yes, these Russians could not have planned such a thing, they were completely unprepared for war. I decided to answer this with a powerful article: look at Hitler! On his army

readiness for war. The article, as soon as I sat down to write it, immediately grew into a book "Suicide": there were no less dope in the Nazi state and in the army than in ours. Having written the book, I realized that the topic was only touched upon in passing. There will be time - I will return to it.

Critics are not appeased: Stalin could not prepare an attack, he himself beheaded his army. I decided to answer this with a powerful article, which resulted in the book "Purification": admire Tukhachevsky and similar "geniuses". And this topic turned out to be bottomless. I just opened it up. Maybe I'll get back to it. There is no time for everything, another problem has overshadowed the horizon: we had such a brilliant commander named Zhukov, so talented ... I had to respond to this with an article that demanded two explanatory articles that demanded ... As a result, now I have only two about Zhukov books - "Shadow of Victory" and "I take back my words." But I'll definitely get to it again one day.

For a quarter of a century now, the Icebreaker has been refuted by a seemingly furious argument: one person could not write such a thing, a group of experts from British intelligence worked here. The

reception is old. This has been accepted for hundreds of years. When the guys from the Holy Inquisition - those who have cold hearts and hot heads - had nothing to cover, they announced: yes, it was not you who wrote, the Devil led your hand! That's all. And go and

prove it's not true. This move is good for that, which allows you to immediately get away from discussing the essence of the issue: this is the creation of the

Devil, what else to argue about? So, using the argument about British intelligence is a manifestation of cowardice and an attempt to evade discussion of really important issues. For nearly thirty years I have been demanding: set up a group of experts against me, we will huddle in front of television cameras, and the people will judge.

But neither the Minister of Defense, nor the Chief of the General Staff, nor the President of the Academy of Sciences, nor the higher leaders have yet responded to this call. And they will never respond. Because their point of view is not logical and deeply immoral. They advocate two mutually exclusive postulates.

First: the Red Army saved Europe from Nazism.

Second: the Soviet Union was a loyal ally of Hitler, would never attack Germany, did not intend to free anyone, and did not think.

Why is this being done? Why do the leaders and their ideological servants furiously prove the unprovable? Yes, then, that it is necessary to plunder the remnants of the country's former power and wealth, but stealing from smart people is not easy. That's why they need to be fooled. And here is the result: tens of millions unanimously repeat: the Soviet Union liberated Europe from the brown plague, but did not want to liberate it, and was not capable of it, because it was completely unprepared for war.

Friendship and cooperation with Hitler, complicity in his crimes, the supply of strategic raw materials, without which the waging of the war and the seizure of Europe were impossible - this is our national disgrace. I broke my fate, broke the fate of my relatives, friends, relatives in order to prove to the country and the world: the alliance with Hitler was a tactic, a distraction. And the strategic plan of Stalin is the defeat of Germany and the liberation of Europe from the brown plague. Being a friend of Hitler is a shame and an outrageous abomination. Attacking Hitler is a sacred thing. By stating this, I save the honor of my country, people and army. All my books are about this.

It's easy to write a book for someone. But to write a good book for someone is impossible.

From an early age, when I was writing the story of a mechanical cat, I tried to solve the riddle: what is a good book? What requirements must it meet?

I thought for a long time, wiser, pondered, and this is what I came to. Let me share: in my opinion, a good book should satisfy only one requirement - it should be interesting. They will object: yes, how so! After all, it must also be

wise, intelligent, and meaningful, informative, inviting, mobilizing, inspiring, sincere. They will throw out a bunch of different requirements for us. Let's face the objections: if the book is interesting, doesn't that say it all? Doesn't this exhaust all possible characteristics at once? Does anything need to be added to this? Well, let's think about it. If a book is interesting, can it also be stupid? If interesting, then maybe

stupid? Empty? Empty? Soulless? An interesting book is always smart, sensible, informative, and sincere. But how to make it like that?

They say you have to invest in your creation is a piece of the soul. No, citizens! Don't be fooled! A piece is not enough! Don't be mean! Don't press! Don't be greedy! Don't be stingy! Invest it all! Whole! No leftovers! But what about then? If you put your whole soul into it, what will you be left with? Calm down, skeptics, cynics and pessimists. She's also immortal. Put your soul into your creation, you will not lose. On the contrary, your soul after that will become higher, wider, deeper and purer.

I wonder what is easier: to compose an interesting book or to make an interesting film?

There can't be two opinions here. To make an interesting film, you need to invest your soul and money. And for a book, only one soul is enough. Let's agree: an ink bubble, a goose tail quill and papyrus are not such big expenses. By and large, only one soul has been invested. And it's all? And it's all.

But even
here

everything is not so simple. Not everyone is able to bare his soul and lay out. Yes, not everyone has it. Some, perhaps, would like to post it, but cannot because of its complete absence. That's why you don't come across a good book every day. That is why it is impossible to write a good book for someone else. You can't squeeze your soul into someone else's cover. And when my opponents run out of

arguments, they start making up dirty and vile lies about me. It upset me. But fate sent a ringing girl from the control group to her friend of life. Here she is sometimes asked: you have such a beautiful accent, you must be Swedish? Yes, - she answers, - a Swede, from near Poltava. This wise woman, with whom we recently celebrated the Ruby wedding, once reassured me: let them talk! Let them speak louder! Let them scream, scream and scream! This is evidence that they have nothing to object to. This is admission.

Viktor Suvorov aka Vladimir Rezun

August 21, 2011



Действие новой остросюжетной повести Виктора Суворова «Змееед», приквела романов-бестселлеров «Контроль» и «Выбор», разворачивается в 1936 году в обстановке непрекращающейся борьбы за власть, интриг и заговоров внутри руководства СССР. Повесть рассказывает о самом начале процесса укрощения Сталиным карательной машины Советского Союза; читатель узнает о том, при каких обстоятельствах судьба свела друг с другом главных героев романов «Контроль» и «Выбор» и какую цену пришлось заплатить каждому из них за неограниченную власть и возможность распоряжаться судьбами других людей.

Повесть «Змееед» — уникальная историческая реконструкция событий 1936 года, в том числе событий малоизвестных, а прототипами ее главных героев — Александра Холованова, Ширманова, Сей Сеича и других — стали реальные исторические личности, работавшие рука об руку со Сталиным и помогавшие ему подняться на вершину власти.

В центре повествования — карьера главного героя по кличке Змееед в органах НКВД от простого наблюдателя, агента наружной слежки и палача, исполнителя смертных приговоров, работающего с особо важными «клиентами», до уполномоченного по особо важным делам и заместителя одного из приближенных Сталина.

В специальном приложении собрано более 50 фотографий, в том числе уникальные архивные снимки 1930-х годов, публикуемые впервые и рассказывающие о действующих лицах повести и прототипах ее героев.

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notes

Notes

1

From 1922 to 1955, the Yaroslavsky station was called the North.

2

The Foreign Office *is* the British Foreign Office.